



STEPPING OFF

Luke Whittaker/Chinook Observer

Zach Foster steps into Black Lake on Saturday at the fifth annual Cape D Triathlon in Ilwaco.

Alley mural project lands city approval

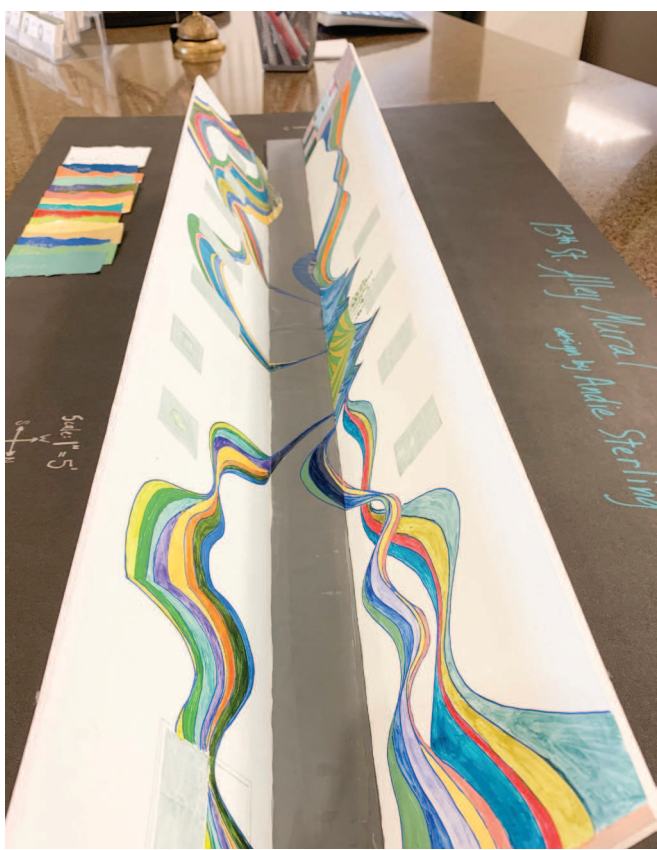
By **KATIE FRANKOWICZ**
The Astorian

A mural planned for Astoria's 13th Street Alley received final approval Tuesday night.

The city's Historic Landmarks Commission signed off on a twisting, colorful design by artist Andie Sterling. The Astoria Downtown Historic District Association landed grant funds for the work and commissioned Sterling in April through a request for proposals process.

The alley provides a shortcut between Commercial Street and Duane Street and became a source of community concern in the past few years. Business owners and volunteers had to cover up offensive graffiti and there were frequent issues with homeless and other people using the alley as a bathroom.

Sarah Lu Heath, the executive director of the downtown association, hopes the improvements will bring people to the alley. The group had experimented with lighting displays, hoping to make it a more welcoming



Astoria Downtown Historic District Association
Local artist Andie Sterling's design for the 13th Street Alley mural includes organic lines leading to the scene of a mountain and farmland valley.

and beautiful place. Sterling's mural, which includes representational images of mountains and trees, as well

as ribbons of color, will have a graffiti-resistant finish. "We have had a tremendous amount of feedback,"

Heath said. "I'm going to be candid and say that I'm surprised at how positive it all was knowing that art can be individual."

Some on the Historic Landmarks Commission worried about the effect of the design on people with visual impairments, but they liked the idea overall and unanimously approved the project.

Commissioner Michelle Dieffenbach called the mural an exciting development for the alley.

"Hopefully the artistic work and the energy that it creates will create a nicer place and encourage better activities in the alley," she said.

Commission President McAndrew Burns recalled similar efforts to improve the alley during the celebration of Astoria's bicentennial in 2011.

"So I'm glad that somebody else finally championed this and made it happen," he said. "It's a nice design and I'm looking forward to seeing it completed."

The downtown association anticipates the mural will be finished in June.

Restoration fundraiser underway for St. Mary's McGowan

By **ALYSSA EVANS**
Chinook Observer

CHINOOK, Wash. — The congregation of St. Mary's McGowan Catholic Church is asking the community to lend a helping hand.

Church leaders decided to hold a fundraiser for needed repairs after a post-Mass meeting.

"I thought, 'Why not us?'" said Lloyd Thomure, a parishioner.

Parts of the church needing work include the windows, roof, siding, front doors, front stairs, front railing and the stairs' foundation. Repairs, renovation and replacement will be done to match the church's design.

"It's beyond the church to restore the McGowan. It's an icon out here; everybody knows it's here," Thomure said. "It'd be easy to tear it down."

The church has "quite a bit" of money already set aside, Thomure said, but not enough to get started or cover the repairs.

Church leaders are working on applying for grants for funding. Other fundraisers, garage sales and community outreach will also be used to raise money.

"The building is our responsibility," Thomure said.

A "fisherman's Mass" is held Sunday nights from



St. Mary's McGowan Catholic Church is in need of repairs.

Memorial Day to Labor Day. Weddings and events are also held at the church. Thomure expects events will be held more often at the church after its renovations are completed.

"As we get older, our timber weathers, our paint wrinkles in the cold north wind, and we lose a few shingles here and there," the fundraising page states.

"The day has come where my body cannot stand up

against the forces of nature anymore."

St. Mary McGowan is located near a one-time Chinook Indian village, and one of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark's camping spots.

The church was built in 1904 after a Catholic community was established in the mid 1800s. Church builder PJ McGowan's great-grandson, Bill Garvin, regularly attends Mass at the church. Bill's wife, Cherrie Garvin, arranges flowers.

"It's such a cool little church," Bill Garvin said. "We want to do anything we can to preserve it."

Garvin said he's thrilled about the restoration fundraiser.

"I'm optimistic people will step up," he said. "It's a project that's well worth it."

The 114-year-old church is designed with late Victorian Gothic style, from its windows and doors, to its roof and bell tower.

"It's fun to see the different layers of history and see

people delve into it," Garvin said.

A park surrounding the church features canoes and information about the Chinook village, Lewis and Clark Expedition and McGowan church settlement.

"The park is really dedicated to those three stories and all the future layers that will come," Garvin said.

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Some old, some new faces after vote for transit district

By **EDWARD STRATTON**
The Astorian

Incumbent Tracy MacDonald, a retired emergency responder, fended off a challenge Tuesday from Larry Taylor, a retired technology worker and former chairman of the Clatsop County Democrats, in the race for Position 1 on the Sunset Empire Transportation District.

MacDonald had 56% of the vote to Taylor's 44%.

Debbie Boothe-Schmidt, a trial assistant with the Clatsop County Attorney's Office and co-owner of Phog Bounders Antique Mall in Astoria, beat incumbent Lylla Gaebel, a retired 911 dispatcher, in the race for Position 2. Boothe-Schmidt had 63% of the vote to Gaebel's 37%.

Tamra Taylor ran uncontested for Position 6, and Bryan Kidder was unopposed for Position 7.

As a driver for Schwan's, MacDonald said, he witnessed firsthand people without cars or too old to drive isolated in rural areas, an issue he hopes to help alleviate in his service on the bus agency. He has focused on the need to expand Dial-A-Ride on-demand transportation for underserved areas.

Taylor recently retired from the technology sector, including a stint at Intel.

He ran for Astoria mayor in 2014, losing to Arline LaMear. He was specifically interested in applying his analysis skills to the transportation board and doesn't know what he'll do next, Taylor said.

Boothe-Schmidt said she was looking for another volunteer opportunity for when she steps down as president of the local American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees union.

Gaebel focused her candidacy on making sure public transportation is available for seniors and lower-income residents unable to drive. She has served on the transportation board about six of the past 10 years.

"I've been there during the troubling times and the good times, and I've really enjoyed my time," she said. "I see a great future for the transportation district."

After nearing financial collapse in 2011 and a temporary financial crisis during the recent federal government shutdown, the bus agency is entering an expansionary mode buffeted by a statewide payroll tax expected to provide an additional \$1.4 million annually.

Candidates are hopeful the transit district can expand service in rural areas, and that technology such as Wi-Fi on buses and online scheduling can entice more riders.

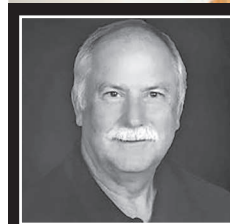


Tracy MacDonald



Debbie Boothe-Schmidt

Consult a PROFESSIONAL



Steve Putman

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Licensed in Oregon and Washington

putmanagency@gmail.com

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