



The Astorian

Former Port operations chief blasts Knight

A damaging assessment of agency's leadership

By **EDWARD STRATTON**
The Astorian

The former second-in-command at the Port of Astoria described Jim Knight, the Port's executive director, as incompetent, dishonest and incapable of managing the agency. Matt McGrath, who worked at the Port for five years before resign-



Jim Knight



Matt McGrath

ing as director of operations in April, shared a letter with his observations about Knight and other documents with the Port Commission after his departure.

McGrath painted a picture of Knight as an unresponsive, disinterested leader with a bad memory who undermines his staff's attempts to repair the Port's operations and reputation. He claimed to have brought his concerns to Knight multiple times over his tenure, but to no avail.

"The executive director's disregard, disrespect, dishonesty and incompetence have destroyed much of what staff and I have been building and rebuilding," he wrote in the

letter. "As my name and reputation are important to me, I ultimately felt compelled to leave a position with good pay and benefits so that I could not only maintain my good name and reputation but also do what was best for the Port."

Knight declined to comment on McGrath's accusations.

Knight denied a public records request by The Astorian for the letter and documents. The newspaper appealed to District Attorney Ron Brown, who ruled the correspon-

dence should be publicly released by June 3, when Knight is expected to be presented with the accusations in executive session.

The Astorian, in the meantime, obtained the letter and documents from a source who requested confidentiality.

Frank Spence, the president of the Port Commission, also declined to comment, claiming the material is confidential.

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AT THE NET

Pickleball players compete at Clatsop Community College, one of many open court sports available. SEE A PHOTO GALLERY ON A5.

Colin Murphey/The Astorian



Pamela Wev Kevin Campbell

Commissioner chides executive over respite center

By **DERRICK DePLEDGE**
The Astorian

A county commissioner chided the CEO of Greater Oregon Behavioral Health Inc. for putting the crisis respite center in Warrenton up for sale and withdrawing from a board that governs the facility.

"Recently, GOBHI has kind of pulled the rug out from that enterprise," Commissioner Pamela Wev said during a presentation Wednesday night from competing coordinated care organizations. "Why should we trust you now?"

"Well, we didn't pull the rug out of that enterprise," Kevin Campbell, GOBHI's

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Jury finds Copell guilty in Newport man's murder



Colin Murphey/The Astorian

Adeena Copell, right, reacts as the verdict is read during her murder trial.

Copell and her boyfriend involved in the crime

By **EDWARD STRATTON**
The Astorian

A jury on Thursday unanimously found Adeena Copell guilty of the 2016 murder of a Newport man by aiding and abetting her boyfriend, Christian Wilkins, with the crime.

The jury also found Copell guilty of second-degree abuse of a corpse and two counts of unlawful use of a vehicle. Wilkins pleaded guilty earlier this month to the same charges.

The 12-person jury began deliberations Wednesday morning and returned a verdict late Thursday afternoon in front of Clatsop County Circuit Court Judge Cindee Matyas.

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Astoria restarts search for new community development director

One candidate turned down offer

By **KATIE FRANKOWICZ**
The Astorian

Despite having two candidates lined up for community development director and an offer on the table, Astoria is once again searching for someone to fill the job.

Kirsten Sackett, the community development director for Ellensburg, Washington, and Portland architect Stuart Emmons participated in a public meet-and-greet event for the post in early May.

City Manager Brett Estes offered the job to one of the candidates, but would not specify who. The offer was accepted, but later declined for personal reasons, Estes said. Emmons confirmed the job offer went to Sackett.

While Emmons was disappointed not to be selected or considered after Sackett declined

the offer, he still plans to move to Astoria.

"(Astoria's) got a lot of good things and a lot of challenges and I want to be a part of it," he said. "I think I'll be fine."

The community development director post has been vacant for more than a year and a half. There have been three extensive recruitment pushes to find a new director since Kevin Cronin left in September 2017, according to Estes.

The city worked with a recruitment agency, The Prothman Co., to find Sackett and Emmons and will now reopen the process to draw on a new pool of candidates.

The city is diving back into the search with an increased salary range in hand.

On Monday, the City Council approved an update to the position's salary schedule,

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