



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Austin Rieck runs through an inspection, checking the trailer connection to the semitruck, while instructor James Crowe watches and tests his knowledge.

## Drivers: Class costs \$5,000 with grants available

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students going through a new commercial truck driving program started this spring in partnership between Clatsop and Tillamook Bay community colleges.

Rieck lost his job after Pacific Power automated power meters. He attended lineman training at Camp Rilea, but needed a commercial driver's license.

"It's one more thing on your application that sets you apart from most," Rieck said.

Rieck faced traveling to Portland for training, but learned of the program through Tillamook Bay, started in response to industry demand for more drivers.

Crowe, a retired long-haul trucker with 34 years and 4 million miles under his belt, sends students through a full-time, four-week course preparing for the commercial driver's license exam at the Department of Motor Vehicles office in Tillamook.

He spends the first week in the classroom teaching about safety, rules and the trucking industry. Students then spend three weeks learning to inspect and drive the Peterbilt in a gravel lot provided by Warrenton Fiber.

The Peterbilt comes with a 13-speed transmission that Crowe teaches students to

### TRUCKING SCHOOL

For more information on the program, contact Randy Lane, commercial truck driver coordinator for Tillamook Bay Community College, at 503-842-8222, ext. 1440, or randylane@tillamookbaycc.edu

properly shift using double-clutching. He teaches them to back up the 48-foot truck and trailer straight and at angles. They go on ever-expanding runs along county roads, through urban areas and down highways.

Crowe sits calmly next to students, giving pointers and observing, ready to pull a valve that immediately stops the truck. Beyond the technical aspects of driving, he reminds the students they are professional drivers who must always take the high road.

"We need to project an image of trucking that doesn't make people feel unsafe or angry," he said.

Crowe's initial batch of four students this spring all got their commercial licenses on the first try. Tim Kindred, a commercial fisherman for the past 25 years, bought a dump truck and began his own transportation company delivering rock and other landscaping products.

"I kind of always wanted to be a truck driver," he said. "Commercial fishing has

been going downhill.

"I wanted to stay local, just because I have two little kids. That's why I got the dump truck. It's a great return on your money."

Arlene Soto, director of a Small Business Development Center in Tillamook, said the transportation industry urged the college to start training commercial drivers. The Tillamook program, started last year, has so far led to more than 15 new commercially licensed drivers.

Everyone who passes the commercial exam has had job offers within a few days, Soto said.

Tillamook's program has been buoyed by donations from the transportation industry, including the first of its three trucks and a refrigerated trailer. The program recently secured grant funding for a truck-driving simulator.

"CCC didn't have the capacity within their existing staffing, or the equipment," Soto said of Clatsop Community College. "They asked to partner with us."

The class costs \$5,000, with some grants available. Kindred and Rieck see the fee as a pittance compared to the jobs available to commercial truck drivers. Nearly 100 truck drivers employed in Clatsop County averaged a salary last year of more than \$48,000, according to state data — more than \$53,000 statewide.

The growth in trucking jobs statewide leveled off in 2016 after a six-year, post-recession spurt, according to state data. Census data shows more truckers than ever. But industry leaders still see a growing shortage, mostly in long-distance carriers. The American Trucking Associations estimates the shortage of drivers could balloon to nearly 180,000 by 2024.

"Right now, there's probably a shortage of 50,000 truck drivers in America," Crowe said. "There are tons of jobs out there."

## Sheriff: One of his bigger accomplishments was winning voter support to build a new county jail

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Monica Steele, the interim county manager, said, "It's unfortunate that he won't be here to finish out his term and I have truly enjoyed working with him and I look forward to working with whoever gets appointed."

Bergin became a sheriff's deputy in 1992 after about seven years at the Seaside Police Department. In 2004, he was elected sheriff and was reelected three times.

One of his biggest accomplishments was winning voter support to build a new county jail.

He was a leading voice for a \$20 million bond measure that passed last November to relocate the jail from Astoria to the former North Coast Youth Correctional Facility in Warrenton. Voters had rejected two previous bond measures for the jail.

"When I started here there was eight of us and the jail was small and tiny and we tried hard to get that new jail put in a couple of times and finally the third time the public saw the need, which is going to be very beneficial," Bergin said. "I'm really happy to see that for this community."

Bergin has also spent much of his career focused on drug enforcement. He ran the interagency narcotics team for several years and, while he was supervisor, the Western States Information Network awarded the narcotics team as team of the year in 2001.

Bergin will also be remembered for his outspoken support for immigration enforcement, which has brought him praise, but also criticism.

"I was chosen to lead this agency by the people and luckily I've been elected four times to this office, and it's a responsibility that just consumes you, it absolutely consumes you," he said. "There's such a silent majority up here that is not happy with the current way our country is going and part of it is the issue on deportation. When people come here illegally, they need to abide by the laws and that is not coming here illegally, and so they need to follow the rules."

In 2014, he opposed a ballot measure that would have given driver's cards to undocumented immigrants. Voters rejected the measure, but the Legislature this year passed a bill that would allow undocumented immigrants to obtain driver's licenses.

Last year, Bergin and 15 other sheriffs signed a letter in support of Measure 105, which would have repealed Oregon's sanctuary law. Voters, however, upheld the sanctuary law.

Last week, the sheriff said the county needed to support U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement after federal immigration agents detained a man at the courthouse.

"Everybody thinks I want to lock up all these Hispanics and throw everybody away and kick everybody out of the country — that's the furthest thing from the truth," Bergin said. "That's just ludicrous."

"And I think if you treat people with respect then you're going to get it back. I hope that is part of my success and part of my legacy. But it's just always being fair to everybody and treating everybody like you'd like to be treated."

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## Planners: Commission divided on building height

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relief from restrictions in Bridge Vista. The two interests, which, combined, own the bulk of the land likely to be redeveloped in Bridge Vista, had asked for flexibility to keep development options open.

The Port and Astoria Warehousing will need to come up with master plans for the plan districts, which must be approved by the city.

Commissioner Cindy Price, who had pushed for a 28-foot-height limit, was the sole vote against the recommendations. She made a motion to accept the floor area ratio proposal but still cap heights at 28 feet. That motion was voted down 4-3.

"May I just say that I think it's reasonable and not at all a bad amendment," Price said following the vote to allow taller buildings. "I voted 'no' just to honor the many hundreds of people who had come to us and asked for 28 feet and who expected it from us."

The floor area ratio proposal took care of two conundrums for commissioners, addressing questions of height and also scale and mass. They had worried that limiting buildings to 28 feet tall could still result in long, sprawling buildings that would block views of the Columbia River.

With a floor area ratio requirement, multiple buildings on single, larger lots must be built a minimum of 60 feet apart and taller buildings will have a smaller footprint on a lot.



Astoria may place new limits on building heights along the riverfront.

Tuesday's vote also means the matter is now off to the City Council. For the most part, planning commissioners were united in their feeling that it was time to make a decision and let the council take a turn wrestling with changes to Bridge Vista.

The few people in the audience, even though most of them continued to advocate for a 28-foot-height limit, indicated they felt the same after numerous meetings on the issue.

The Planning Commission first began discussing changes to Bridge Vista's codes earlier this year following the approval by the City Council of a controversial four-story Marriott-brand hotel — the Fairfield Inn and Suites — off Second Street. Hollander Hospitality has yet to take any further steps to begin building the hotel, but the multiple hearings and appeals around the project revealed gaps and confusion in the codes.

What city staff initially

intended as a quick fix morphed into a desire by city leaders to address community concerns about hotel development and large buildings in general on the riverfront.

Hundreds of people signed petitions advocating for lower height limits in Bridge Vista. Planning commissioner Rosemary Johnson and other city staff back to the drawing board numerous times to tweak proposals and explore questions and suggestions.

On several occasions, public hearings and commission deliberations were continued as commissioners struggled to reach an agreement on what should be allowed.

The commission was divided on the question of building height, with some commissioners adamantly opposed to 28 feet, others equally opposed to going any higher and several in the middle with concerns about both options.