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Astoria, Warrenton struggle with homelessness

Police calls remain high

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Astorian

Police calls related to homelessness remain high in Astoria, but the number of illegal camping complaints appears to be down from last year.

Warrenton, which is used to a more seasonal homeless population, is seeing a high volume of police calls, as well as numerous camps.

Warrenton police have started tracking homelessness-related calls using the same coding system Astoria police implemented last year.

In Astoria, officers use two different codes — “40” for a call involving homelessness in general; “41” for a call that involves an aggressive interaction with someone who is homeless — to categorize calls after they have finished responding. The codes provide the police department with a way to track call volume and detail otherwise anecdotal information about homelessness.

Since late June, Warrenton police have recorded 60 homelessness-related calls, only one of them for an aggressive encounter.

Even just a year ago, Warrenton Police Chief Mathew Workman said these numbers would have been a surprise. Not anymore.

“Now that we’re in the midst of this — I’ve had people refer to it as an epidemic — it’s just a much larger problem this year in Warrenton than it has ever been,” he said.

Unlike Astoria, Warrenton has not typically had a visible, year-round homeless population. Instead, most obvious signs of homelessness — camps and panhandling — proliferate during the summer months.

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Westport residents see significant sewer rate increases

A 46% hike over four years

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

Clatsop County commissioners on Wednesday night approved a considerable rate increase for sewer service in Westport.

Residents in Westport have not seen a rate hike since 2005, but should expect a 46% increase over the next four years.

A roughly 35% increase will take effect on Aug. 20. Rates will go up an additional 5% in the second year, 3% in the third year and 3% in the fourth year.

Ted McLean, the county’s public works director, said the rate increases come as a result of escalating operational costs.

McLean said the county is preparing for more upgrades to comply with state Department of Environmental Quality permit requirements.

Other planned upgrades include addressing pH issues at the plant, repairs to infrastructure and testing for system infiltration.

After conducting infiltration studies, the county found some broken septic tanks.

McLean said the septic tanks are fiberglass with basically a large concrete weight on top of them. He said because the area is inundated with groundwater, it creates an effect on septic tanks that make them break easily.

The sewer district has also not been able to save for contingencies.

McLean said homeowners in Westport were sent an invitation to a public meeting to discuss the rate increases.

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The battle over LNG dominated politics in Clatsop County for a decade.

The Astorian

Case study looks at lessons from LNG fight

A decadelong debate in Clatsop County

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

A case study on the fight over LNG in Clatsop County details how activists went beyond environmental concerns and used the potential threat to tourism and fears about earthquakes and tsunamis to help build public opposition.

Two liquefied natural gas proj-

ects — at Bradwood Landing east of Astoria and on the Skipanon Peninsula in Warrenton — dominated political debate on the North Coast for more than a decade.

The project at Bradwood Landing sputtered after the developer, NorthernStar Natural Gas Inc., filed for bankruptcy in 2010. Oregon LNG withdrew from a \$6 billion export terminal and pipeline project in Warrenton in 2016 after financing and regulatory obstacles.

The case study, prepared by researchers at the University of Alaska, the University of Dela-

ware, Oregon State University and the State University of New York, looked at how activists opposed to LNG helped turn public opinion against the projects.

“LNG opponents gained early momentum over supporters by countering economic arguments in support of the proposed facilities. By framing LNG as a threat to the future of Clatsop County’s budding tourist economy, opponents seemed more in tune with the existing local community than

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‘I THINK THE OPPONENTS IN THE CLATSOP COUNTY CASE WERE QUITE EFFECTIVE IN PUSHING FORWARD A FRAME THAT WASN’T JUST ABOUT ENVIRONMENT. IT WAS, TOO, BUT IT WAS ALSO ABOUT POTENTIAL ECONOMIC IMPACTS IF THE FACILITY WERE TO BE BUILT.’

Hilary Boudet | an associate professor in the sociology program at Oregon State, who was one of the authors

Astoria Co+op offers farmers loans for produce

Partnership with 46 North Farm

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Astorian

Teresa Retzlaff and Packy Coleman, owners of 46 North Farm in Olney, have provided plant starts and produce to the Astoria Co+op for the past seven years, becoming one of the first local producers to work with the grocery.

The co-op recently launched a microloan program for farmers, starting with \$1,500 to help 46 North install more covered areas to protect flowers from the weather.

Retzlaff described the loan as similar to community-supported agriculture, in which customers prepay farmers in the winter and receive produce throughout the harvest season.

The co-op wanted more flowers for the new store opening later this year in Mill Pond, and Retzlaff wanted to grow more flowers. She estimated \$1,500 to build four 100-foot caterpillar tunnels to protect her flowers from the rain and allow the farm to plant earlier in the spring.

“A lot of times when you’re starting out you don’t just have that lying around,” she said.

Retzlaff and Coleman con-



Edward Stratton/The Astorian

Teresa Retzlaff, co-owner of 46 North Farm, turned a \$1,500 loan from the Astoria Co+op into four caterpillar tunnels that protect her flowers from the weather and allow the farm to plant earlier in the spring.

structed the tunnels in April using local materials and began taking between \$100 and \$300 off of each invoice on the plant starts and produce they brought to the co-op, paying off their loan in full earlier this month.

Danny Rasmussen, the produce manager for the co-op, said the store is trying to sup-

port local farmers and expand its selection of local food in the new location. At peak season, the co-op can source nearly half of its produce directly from farmers, he said.

“We’ll take this on a case-by-case basis,” he said of the loans. “I would like to do one farm again next year. We’d like to

extend these loans to farms who have a track record of delivering great products to the co-op. These farms will also need to show us a plan for how a loan can help grow their business.”

The support is crucial for small farmers, who often have

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