

# the Astorian

## County delays vote on tobacco

Juul weighs in on flavor ban

By NICOLE BALES  
*The Astorian*

Clatsop County commissioners were expected to approve a tobacco ordinance Wednesday night but decided to delay the vote following backlash from the electronic cigarette company, Juul, and local tobacco retailers.

The ordinance would give the county the authority to license and inspect tobacco retailers, as well as ban flavored tobacco, which is favored by teenagers. The county would be the first in the state to ban flavored tobacco products.

Nearly 20 people for and against the ordinance testified during the public hearing. There was a split between health professionals and educators and the tobacco industry, mostly over the ban on flavored tobacco.

Commissioners decided to postpone action until January so they can address criticism about the potential lack of transparency in the process.

“This is about preventing kids from becoming smokers in the future,” Michael McNickle, the county’s public health director, said.

“One of the ways to do that is at the policy level, and it has been proven by all the peer-reviewed works that prevention at the policy level works the best. By getting it out of their hands of those in the beginning, take it out of their reach, take it out of their sight, the temptation goes away. The questions also stop and that tends to be working the best.”

McNickle also pointed to the rash of vaping-related illnesses and deaths nationwide.

*‘THIS IS ABOUT PREVENTING KIDS FROM BECOMING SMOKERS IN THE FUTURE’*

Michael McNickle | Clatsop County’s public health director

The Oregon Health Authority released a public health warning Thursday advising people to stop vaping immediately. The agency confirmed a second vaping-related death in the state.

Although the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration have not identified a cause, the warning said those who have been hospitalized in Oregon after experiencing worsening symptoms, including shortness of breath, cough or chest pain all reported e-cigarette use or vaping.

“People should stop vaping immediately,” said Dean Sidelinger, the state health officer. “If you vape, whether it’s cannabis, nicotine or other products, please quit. These are addictive substances, and we encourage people to take advantage of free resources to help them quit.”

### National scrutiny

The county began working on the ordinance in 2018, but the decision on whether to adopt it is happening in the midst of national scrutiny into Juul.

Juul Labs Inc. announced this week it will replace its chief executive and stop advertising electronic cigarettes in the U.S. The company also said it would not fight the Trump administration’s proposed nationwide ban on flavored e-cigarettes.

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## A CRUSH OF CRUISE SHIPS IN ASTORIA



Photos by Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian  
The Coral Princess, carrying up to 3,000 people, cruises beneath the Astoria Bridge before anchoring in the Columbia River.

## Three ships arrived Thursday

By EDWARD STRATTON  
and LUCY KLEINER  
*The Astorian*

This year’s cruise ship season crescendoed Thursday in Astoria with around 4,500 passengers arriving on three ships, part of an estimated 30,000 visitors on 17 ships from April through October.

Next year, more than 77,000 visitors on 35 ships are scheduled to arrive, including two days in one week with more than 5,000 passengers, raising questions about when enough is enough.

Hundreds of passengers flooded the Columbia River Maritime Museum parking lot Thursday afternoon, shuttled by orange-and-white lifeboats from the Coral Princess, anchored in the middle

of the Columbia River. The Coral Princess carried up to 3,000 passengers. Two 700-passenger boats, the Seven Seas Mariner and Oceania Regatta, parked along Pier 1 at the Port of Astoria.

Once they touched land, the Coral Princess’ passengers scattered. Some headed to the museum. Others gathered to take family photos with the Astoria Bridge in the background.

Swedish, Mandarin and Spanish could be heard as employees

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## Sunset Empire: Buses are safe

Former employee had raised alarm

By LUCY KLEINER  
*The Astorian*

The maintenance supervisor at Sunset Empire Transportation District has assured the district’s board that buses on the road are safe.

“They wouldn’t go out if there was a safety issue,” Scott Smith said at a board meeting Thursday morning. “The drivers would catch them first and when they do, we don’t send them out.”

The testimony from Smith, the transit district’s maintenance supervisor for two years, counters Shawn Lines, a former employee, who told the board in August that a number of buses have maintenance flaws that make them unsafe.

“We brought the maintenance up to where it is now,” Smith said, “where everything is available to be on the road.”

Jeff Hazen, the transit district’s executive director, said the maintenance program has a higher standard than three or four years ago. “We invested in our maintenance program by hiring Scott as our maintenance supervisor,” he said.

Part of Smith’s responsibilities include responding to bus inspections that drivers are required to complete before and after their trips.

Hazen provided the board with a copy of one, undated pretrip inspection. He also provided an annual vehicle inspection report from January. The report included a detailed list of the transit district’s response to the issues from the inspection. For this particular bus, all front and rear brakes, a left-side turn signal light and wipers were replaced.

Every Sunset Empire bus is subject to a third-party inspection annually, according to Hazen, though only one inspection report was presented at the meeting.

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## State will hold off on timber sale

A ‘step back’ on Norriston Heights

By NICOLE BALES  
and KATIE FRANKOWICZ  
*The Astorian*

The Oregon Department of Forestry is pausing a controversial timber sale near Arch Cape.

The announcement came ahead of a public meeting on Monday between representatives of the Department of Forestry, Clatsop County and property owners who fear their water could be impacted by a timber harvest at Norriston Heights between Arcadia Beach and Hug Point.

The harvest would involve a modified clearcut of more than 70 acres on the east side of U.S. Highway 101.

“A good way to look at it is we’re taking a step back and pressing pause,” said Jason Cox, a spokesman for the Department of Forestry.

The timber sale will be deferred for a minimum of one year, but there is no specific timeline while the state continues to gather public input and investigate the concerns, Cox said.

“We want to consider all potential options for a win-win,” Cox said. The state must balance the economic, environmental and social benefits of timber sales, he added. “That’s a balance we’re trying to strike,” he said.

One possible outcome could be a land

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Melissa Faber, a busser at the Silver Salmon Grille, gives a sample cup of clam chowder to Mary Bartell, a cruise ship passenger from Toronto, outside the restaurant.



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