

Fort George: State grant allowed brewery to buy property

Continued from Page A1

Shifting most of the production and canning to the warehouse will allow the Lovell Building brewery to focus more on barrel-aged, sour and other experimental, smaller-batch beers, he said.

“We will also have a small canning line in (the Lovell Building) to package limited runs of beers that we think are excellent,” Frankowicz said. “This will allow patrons to take beers to go from our pub that are different from what is found on the store shelves.”

Much of the warehouse space will be used for storing cans, Nemlowill said. The rest he is unsure about, but said the brewery could sublease space to other craft beverage makers and small manufacturers. Fort George



The Elmore Cannery used to package and label cans of salmon in Astoria, an operation replaced by Astoria Warehousing from 1983 until its relocation to Kent last year.

will also partner with Clatsop Community College to create a fermentation

program.

Astoria requires manufacturers on the waterfront to include a retail aspect. To fulfill that requirement, Fort George plans to eventually add a small taproom at the northwestern corner of the campus with a panoramic view of the Columbia River and Astoria Bridge in what Nemlowill calls “the nicest view in town.”

Years in the making

Fort George first reached out three years ago to Astoria Warehousing for more space, but the company had no plans at the time of moving, Nemlowill said.

The brewery instead bought 10 acres at the North Coast Business Park in Warrenton. But the property faced wetland and other challenges that ballooned

the projected cost of building there to \$10 million, Nemlowill said. He was unsure of the company’s plans with the Warrenton property now that it’s chosen Astoria.

When Astoria Warehousing’s parent company shut down and relocated the local operation to Kent, Washington, Fort George’s focus went back to Astoria. But the brewery struggled to get financing for the deal because of historical underground petroleum leakage from surrounding properties.

State Sen. Betsy Johnson, D-Scappoose, helped secure \$1 million from Business Oregon, the state’s economic development agency, in the last legislative session to pay for removing the contamination, estimated to

take six months to a year.

The state grant allowed Fort George to buy the property and get the money for improvements using a \$12 million loan from U.S. Bank, gleaned from the federal New Markets Tax Credit program secured by regional lender Craft3.

Craft3, a rural- and environmental-focused community development lender, competes for tax credits to invest in high-poverty areas. The lender recently secured \$50 million, due in large part to the attractiveness of Fort George’s project, said CEO Adam Zimmerman.

“This is going to be a pretty iconic project,” he said. “It is difficult to do rural manufacturing projects pretty much anywhere in the U.S.”

Nemlowill speaks with

pride about the return of canning to the warehouse and replacing the 25 jobs lost when the operation moved north. He named the property holding company Blue Jumpsuit LLC in honor of the uniforms workers at the labeling company wore.

“They ran an extremely efficient labeling company out of here,” he said. “It was so efficient that they were willing to drive ... 1,500 truckloads a year of salmon cans from Kent, Washington, to Astoria to put labels on them and then ship them all back up to Kent, Washington, to then put them on barges and send them out to the world.”

Nemlowill and Harris hope to be sending out Fort George cans from the warehouses by the end of next year.

Uniontown: Councilors ultimately sided with businesses

Continued from Page A1

But Rosemary Johnson, a city planning consultant, and city councilors argued that the impact would only shift — not limit — development.

“View corridors may include parking and landscaping,” Johnson said. “Therefore, all this view corridor would do is place the building to the west and allow that eastern 70-foot (portion) to be used for parking and landscaping. It does not prohibit use of these parcels.”

Development in the Bridge Vista zone would already be limited to half of lot coverage and north-south-oriented buildings with a minimum of 60 feet in between, Johnson said,

meaning the extended view corridors would not reduce the square footage a developer could build.

Bridge Vista also includes the possibility of plan districts for Port-owned land and the Astoria Warehousing property, recently purchased by Fort George Brewery. The plan districts, a recognition of the unique value of the land to create higher-quality jobs, would allow the Port and Fort George to develop master plans within the next five years and ask the City Council for exceptions to Bridge Vista rules.

City councilors ultimately sided with Uniontown businesses in fear of losing river views and stressed the need for balance between busi-

nesses and the Port. The City Council has done that in part by including the possibility of plan districts, said City Councilor Jessamyn West and Mayor Bruce Jones.

The City Council closed the public hearing on the dead-end street view amendments to Bridge Vista, setting up a second reading and likely adoption at the Oct. 21 meeting. The council also unanimously approved a master plan for the Uniontown neighborhood.

In other business Monday night, the City Council:

- Approved the purchase of a new public works truck and crane body for nearly \$90,000; a fire department truck for more than \$55,000; and two new hybrid

police cruisers for more than \$60,000 each.

• Signed off on a new operating agreement for the Port’s fast-response and firefighting boat Trident that will have the agency providing maintenance and the fire department drivers and firefighters.

• Voted to give City Manager Brett Estes a 10% raise beyond his usual 3% cost-of-living adjustment. His salary will go from \$132,205 to \$145,426.

The vote came after the City Council held an executive session to privately review Estes’ performance. Jones said publicly that Estes has done a fabulous job, and the city is indebted to him for his ability to pull myriad issues together.

Dock: Lease will likely be adopted on Oct. 21 by the City Council

Continued from Page A1

The lease came before the City Council for a vote in September. But American Queen’s attorney, Eric Denley, learned about the deal the same day and called foul, arguing it would essentially create a monopoly for American Cruise Lines.

American Queen came with its own deal Monday, but city councilors leaned toward American Cruise Lines’ proposal. Ares Michaelides, president of American Queen, attended the meeting Monday and said the company would be open to a lease with American Cruise Lines that protects his company’s access to the dock.

The City Council and companies engaged in a back-and-forth negotiation before tentatively reaching a deal that would provide American Cruise Lines the lease, albeit with increased competitive protections.

American Cruise Lines agreed to schedule ships two years out, give the city a part in setting fair dockage rates, ensure ships don’t park at the dock more than 24 hours at a time and eventually expand the 17th Street Dock to accommodate two vessels at a time.

American Cruise Lines also agreed to decrease the

term of the lease from 41 to 26 years, eliminating a 15-year renewal option. The lease will likely be adopted by the City Council on Oct. 21.

Jeff Harrington, the city’s public works director, has argued the company can better-maintain the ailing mooring dolphins next to the dock than the cash-strapped city. He estimated fixing all seven would cost between \$500,000 and \$600,000, money the city cannot afford while trying to pay down more than \$1 million in debt for the reconstruction of the dock.

City Councilor Roger Rocka took issue with the lease not requiring the company to make any improvements or expansions to the dock. But the city is already unlikely to make any improvements, Harrington said.

Charles Robertson, vice president of American Cruise Lines, said the company planned to make improvements to the dock but didn’t want to lay them out until it has a lease. The company plans to eventually have five cruise ships on the Columbia, he said.

“The existing facility is fine for now,” he said. “Our goal would be to be able to bring in two ships at a time.”

Bonamici: ‘We’re not interested in putting people out of jobs’

Continued from Page A1

seen is admission about what the phone call was and the summary of the phone call to me raises serious enough concerns, but we need to wait until the inquiry is finished.”

Bob Shortman, the Clatsop County Republican chairman, was critical of House Democrats. “Right now, this is just a political partisan pact in the House to hinder his reelection campaign,” he said.

At the town hall, Bonamici said impeachment is among the top five issues people are raising with her, along with prescription drug abuse, migrant children being separated from their families, public lands and robocalls.

However, she wanted constituents to know that the impeachment inquiry is not all Congress is doing.

Bonamici said it is important to stay hopeful and engaged. Although she said it has been difficult to get some things done, “we also have to look at where we are getting things done.”

Health care, making college more affordable and addressing climate change are among the congresswoman’s top priorities. She pointed to the Lower Drug Costs Now Act, which would allow Medicare to

negotiate directly with drug companies over prices for some of the costliest drugs.

She said she also wants to make sure everyone has a career path, whether through college, apprenticeship or a worker training program — a goal reflected in a bipartisan apprenticeship bill she is working on.

Bonamici said she wants to move toward a clean energy economy while also discussing the workforce and jobs.

Clatsop County, as well as other parts of the state, has felt the tension between people who want to preserve or revive jobs in industries such as timber and those who want to transition to a clean energy economy.

Animosity over state House Bill 2020 — a cap and trade measure that failed at the Legislature — is lingering as #Timber Unity protesters ramp up efforts to recall state Rep. Tiffany Mitchell, D-Astoria, for voting for the bill.

“No one’s interested in putting anyone out of a job. My grandfather was a coal miner. We’re not interested in putting people out of jobs. We’re interested in making sure people are getting good-paying jobs and get the skills to work in renewable energy or other local industries,” Bonamici said.



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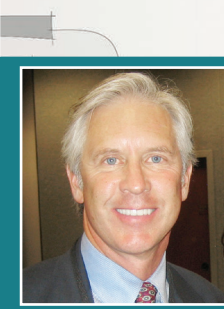
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