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# Astorian

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## IN A BEER TOWN, A GROWING TASTE FOR WINE

A connection to  
vineyards in the valley



Photos by Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

**ABOVE:** Lagrein grapes hang from the vine at Montinore Estate, ready to be harvested. **BELOW:** Montinore Estate is a 200-acre vineyard that focuses on growing pinot noir and pinot gris in Forest Grove.

By LUCY KLEINER  
*The Astorian*

**L**ess than 75 miles from Astoria lies what The New York Times called “the country’s most exciting wine area,” a region more commonly known as the Willamette Valley.

For decades, the valley’s rich soils, distinct climate and proximity to the Pacific have attracted winemakers from around the world. This week, wineries throughout the valley wrapped up their harvest season, the busiest time of year in the vineyards, and started the fermentation process that will convert the sweet fruit to robust wine and fill glasses across the world — and along the North Coast.

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## Cannon Beach fire chief to retire

Benedict served for three years

By NICOLE BALES  
*The Astorian*

CANNON BEACH — After three years as the fire chief for the Cannon Beach Rural Fire Protection District, Matt Benedict announced he will retire at the end of the year.

Benedict will help the fire district’s board with the recruitment of a new chief.

“I’ve been in the fire service for 30 years and it takes its toll on you physically and mentally,” he said. “I’ve put in 30 years and it is time for me to give this body a rest.”

Every day the fire department is called to a scene, they are getting called to somebody’s worst day, he said. Experiencing people’s worst days with them builds up and leaves firefighters learning to cope, he said.

Prior to Cannon Beach, Benedict served as assistant fire chief for the Pendleton Fire Department, where he climbed the ranks over 20 years.

The Cannon Beach fire district hired Benedict in 2016 to replace Mike Balzer, who was fired in 2015. Balzer filed a civil rights lawsuit against the fire district that was eventually settled by a \$55,000 payout.

“I’m comfortable leaving this organiza-



Colin Murphey/The Astorian

**Cannon Beach Fire Chief Matt Benedict will retire.**

tion the way I have developed it over the past three years,” Benedict said. “Now I get to revitalize some of those things that kind of got lost during my career.”

Benedict is not planning on staying in the area. He said his wife intends to work as a traveling nurse.

Benedict is looking forward to spending more time with his family, traveling and enjoying the outdoors.

Although he will not miss all the rain, Benedict said he will miss the community, the beautiful days and listening to the ocean and campfire in the evenings.

## Library needs more money for renovation

Well short of \$7M goal

By EDWARD STRATTON  
*The Astorian*

A nonprofit foundation raising money to help renovate the Astoria Library has acknowledged the \$7 million project needs more public financing.

Since forming in 2014 to support renovation, the foundation has raised about \$83,500 in grants and individual donations after expenses. Coupled with another \$1.6 million set aside by the city, the amount still falls well short of an estimated \$7 million needed for a full renovation or even a scaled-back option.

The library foundation recently put the City Council on notice that public financing will be necessary.

“The board of the foundation believes that the next phase of funding efforts should be initiated by council and carried out by staff,” a recent report from the foundation to city councilors concluded.

The foundation lists a mix of public funding options, including a general obligation bond that would need voter approval, a full faith and credit bond the city would budget to pay back, the federal New Markets Tax Credit program and other financing tools.

The city has so far set aside around \$750,000 in carbon sequestration credits from its forest preserve for the renovations. Former mayor W.C. Logan, whose name would go on a renovated library, left a memorial fund now worth about \$900,000.



W.C. Logan

A full renovation, approaching \$7 million, would modernize the existing 18,000-square-foot building, adding large windows on 10th and Duane streets and spaces for meetings, reading, teens and families. A new staircase and elevator would open public access to the basement, which would include an expanded Flag Room for community gatherings, training kitchen, gallery, media lab, collaboration rooms and the Astoriana Room for historical collections.

Renovating the basement for public access would add at least \$1.6 million to the project cost. A scaled-back renovation option would include many of the same improvements on the main floor, but keep the basement for staff only and collections available by request but not to browse. Both renovation options would remove the mezzanine on the main floor and make the building accessible to the disabled.

The concept of a new library has been downgraded over time from being part of a mixed-use housing development at Heritage Square and an expansion into the former Waldorf Hotel to a renovation of the existing building. City councilors last year gave the green light to the full renovation, contingent on the library foundation’s ability to go beyond a \$3.5 million fundraising goal and reach \$5 million to pair with the \$1.6 million set aside by the city.

“The council went with the large approach because the foundation said they could raise the funds,” City Manager Brett Estes said.

Former Mayor Arline LaMear, the president of the library foundation and a former librarian, said the volunteer group has worked hard to get grants, but that many large funding institutions have prioritized other needs, such as affordable housing.

“It’s amazing how many of these grants will say to you, ‘Don’t even apply until you have half the money,’” she said.

The library foundation will hear back in December on an application for a \$750,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. But the highly competitive grant would require a \$3 million local match raised within five years of when the foundation applied, meaning the Logan funds could not be tapped.

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