

OUR VIEW

A working waterfront

There is a nice symmetry to Fort George Brewery’s \$8 million purchase of Astoria Warehousing.

Chris Nemlowill, the brewery’s co-founder, named the holding company for the new project Blue Jumpsuit LLC, a nod to the uniforms workers used to wear when they labeled cans for salmon.

The future of the sprawling property on the waterfront was in doubt when Astoria Warehousing closed last year and relocated to Kent, Washington.

Fort George’s purchase is a comforting sign of local investment in Astoria, with the potential to restore some of the 25 jobs lost when Astoria Warehousing moved away.

But we hope people read Edward Stratton’s story on the purchase very carefully.

The project would likely not have happened without \$1 million in state lottery money to clean up old petroleum pollution. State Sen. Betsy Johnson, D-Scappoose, the co-chair of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means, was able to steer the money to Business Oregon in a “Christmas tree bill” for local projects at the end of the legislative session.

The state money made it easier



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian  
Fort George Brewery will revive canning at Astoria Warehousing on the Columbia River.

for Fort George to get a loan from U.S. Bank and tap into the federal New Markets Tax Credit program through regional lender Craft3.

Adam Zimmerman, Craft3’s CEO, put the deal into perspective. “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.”

All of this heavy political and financial lifting was necessary for a popular brewery to revive canning at a place that housed canning for decades.

One of the core principles

behind the Riverfront Vision Plan is to encourage a mix of uses that support a working waterfront and the city’s economy.

That might not seem obvious to people who have been following the debates at City Hall over the past few years on Bridge Vista, the section of the plan that covers Portway Street to Second Street in Uniontown and includes the Astoria Warehousing property. Much of the emphasis has been on preserving views of the Columbia River and the Astoria Bridge and restricting development.

We hope the City Council recognizes this imbalance and the importance of a working waterfront to the city’s prosperity.

On Monday night, the council is expected to approve changes to Bridge Vista that further restrict building height and scale to preserve views and public access. The changes also include plan districts for the Astoria Warehousing property and the Port of Astoria’s West Mooring Basin.

Fort George and the Port would get five years to create master plans that — if accepted by the city — could bypass the development restrictions in Bridge Vista.

This is an essential escape hatch. The plan districts would allow some code flexibility at property in Bridge Vista that is most suited to industrial-scale development, as well as mixed-use projects that could resuscitate a fading marina.

As the Fort George purchase shows, free market forces alone are often not enough to make small manufacturing projects pencil out. If Astoria is serious about a working waterfront — blue jumpsuits that represent living-wage jobs, not nostalgia for the past — city leaders should make sure the Riverfront Vision Plan reflects a regulatory balance.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Overdue changes

Thank you to our representative, Tiffany Mitchell, for her strong support for paid family and medical leave, which has now been signed into law. The new law will offer much needed support for Oregon’s working families.

Under the new law, Oregon will become the eighth state to offer paid family and medical leave to workers. Every Oregon worker who earns more than \$1,000 a year will be eligible for 12 weeks of paid family or medical leave each year. This will not include vacation or sick leave.

The new law will be so important for Oregon workers recovering from a serious illness, for families with a new child and for families caring for loved ones dealing with a serious illness.

It’s so important to have that peace of mind to know you won’t lose your job, or won’t get paid, because you have a serious illness or you must take time off to care for a sick child. It’s legislation like this that really does something to help working families.

Tiffany continues to work hard to bring some long overdue changes to all of us here on the coast.

GENEIA JAMESON  
Seaside



Measure of courage

Whatever our political leanings — Republican, Democrat or Independent — aren’t we all best served by representatives who carefully study each issue, and then vote based on what they believe is best for all the people they represent?

We may strongly disagree with a particular vote. But a legislator who votes with conscience and the ability to weigh consequences is far better in the long run than one who is “in somebody’s pocket.”

I didn’t support Tiffany Mitchell when she ran for state representative. I didn’t think she yet had enough experience or knowledge for the job.

But Mitchell has proven that she is willing to do the work, to understand issues and the sometimes complicated effects they may have, and she has shown a substantial measure of courage to boot.

I think she deserves our respect and our support.

ROGER ROCKA  
Astoria

Concerned

I am concerned about the effort to recall Tiffany Mitchell. I thought we want someone who analyzes, reasons and makes hard decisions with our collective interests in mind.

Early in her campaign, Tiffany met with me for two hours discussing concerns about substance abuse in our state and community. She listened and respectfully asked questions, which indicated she cared and was truly interested in what I had to say. She demonstrated the ability to hear uncomfortable facts about an unpopular problem.

She was elected because of her positions on certain issues, and then after evaluating some, she changed. Some consider this a betrayal; to me it is evidence she has an incredible degree of courage and integrity. After seeing the big picture, she changed her mind, rather than cowardly sticking to her original position, while knowing the potential consequences.

Now that is the kind of thoughtful, gutsy representation this state and country need. In this age of mindless polarization and disinformation, we all need to take a step back and look at what we, as individual citizens, need to do to help.

We can’t expect our elected officials to please everyone. In fact, compromise requires a certain amount of disappointment that mature adults are expected to understand. It’s unwise and foolish to expect your candidate to satisfy only your

needs, and not those who didn’t vote for them.

BRENTON KAHLE  
Astoria

Will of the people

Tiffany Mitchell has not done the will of the people despite what her supporters say. In 2014, her district voted over 2 to 1 on Measure 88, which would’ve granted illegal aliens driver licenses.

In 2019, Rep. Mitchell was a sponsor of House Bill 2015 that granted drivers licenses to illegals. This bill passed, despite what Mitchell’s constituents voted down five years earlier.

The majority of the jobs in Mitchell’s district depend on fishing and forestry. Yet she was a staunch supporter of a bill that would have put many of our neighbors in that industry out of work. Even a local union begged her to not support it. She claimed to be for the workers.

I would urge my fellow House District 32 residents to look past the letter ‘D’ next to her name. Ask yourself if she really represents your values. If there is even a question in your mind, please sign the petition

to recall. At the very least, we can keep her accountable to the voters in her district.

SHELLY SOLUM  
Astoria

Sincere and thoughtful

I am one of the many who voted for Tiffany Mitchell to represent us during the last election. When I met her during the campaign, I found her to be sincere and thoughtful, two good qualities in people volunteering to serve us in office.

Whether or not I agree with her vote on a particular issue, I do not understand or support a campaign to recall any candidate based on their vote while in office.

It is my understanding that in the U.S., when voters disagree with a representative’s position on an issue, the legal, honest and decent solution is to vote for another candidate at the next election.

In my opinion, this recall is an attempt to divide us against each other, rather than help us unite for the good of all, in a period of time when our unity is so important to our quality of life.

RENEE ROWE  
Astoria