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County leaders say tsunami zone law won't change construction plans

A new law repealed ban

By EMILY LINDBLOM
For The Astorian

Leaders in Clatsop County say they wouldn't want to build new schools or police and fire stations in the path of a tsunami, although Oregon now allows it.

Cannon Beach Mayor Sam Steidel said he was disappointed when the Legislature repealed a nearly 25-year-old ban on the construction of critical facilities in tsunami inundation zones in June.

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"It seems very irresponsible to allow for public buildings to be built in an area known to be dangerous," Steidel said, adding he didn't feel there was enough discussion about the issue before the repeal.

Seaside Mayor Jay Barber shared Steidel's disappointment. "We are dis-

mayed by the action to eradicate the ban before really having something else to offer," he said.

Seaside is relocating schools outside of the tsunami inundation zone, as well as a water reservoir, with space for emergency radio communications, emergency medical technicians and fire services.

"But we do know the state is preparing to meet with local leaders to discuss what is needed in the inundation zones," Barber said.

Gov. Kate Brown's office plans to hold a meeting with local leaders this

month about creating new standards for construction in areas at risk in a tsunami.

The new law was driven by coastal lawmakers, particularly from the central coast, who said the ban could have significant economic consequences for towns unable to build critical infrastructure. The state House and Senate voted overwhelmingly to repeal the ban. State Rep. Tiffany Mitchell, D-Astoria, and state Sen. Betsy Johnson, D-Scappoose, voted for the repeal.

Preparation

Like Steidel and Barber, Astoria Mayor Bruce Jones said he can't see

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Attendance rates are a bright spot

School report cards track performance

By ELIZABETH MILLER
Oregon Public Broadcasting

The Oregon Department of Education has released its At-A-Glance Profiles for schools and districts — brief dashboard summaries of how schools are doing, with data on attendance, student achievement and whether students are on track to graduate.

According to the 2018-2019 school year data, chronic absenteeism — the share of students who miss at least 10% of a school year — didn't get worse.

"For the first time since we've started reporting chronic absenteeism rates, we've seen them flatten out," said Colt Gill, the director of the Oregon Department of Education.

While the overall change in attendance is nearly unchanged from the year before, high schools showed a more pronounced shift, with absentee rates decreasing about a half percent.

State education specialist Marnie Jewell said it's a sign of progress for the state's Every Day Matters campaign to increase school attendance.

"We have districts showing up to meet students' needs," Jewell said. "That might mean buying a washer and dryer, so students have clean clothes. It might mean providing additional transportation when students miss the bus and going and picking them up."

Twenty-seven school districts throughout the state received additional funding from a state grant to improve attendance. They include Butte Falls, where regular attendance increased 7%, and Centennial School District, which saw improvements at the middle and high school levels.

Local metrics

In Clatsop County, schools showed increases in attendance and high school completion metrics for last school year.

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Judson Moore and Suzy Freeman are the owners of Unfurl in Manzanita.

Nicole Bales/The Astorian

A very eco-friendly outpost in Manzanita

Unfurl values sustainability

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

MANZANITA — Suzy Freeman walked around the store picking up different clothing items, explaining what makes the materials environmentally sustainable.

Freeman and her husband, Judson Moore, own Unfurl, an eco-friendly clothing store in Manzanita which celebrated its 15-year anniversary this summer.

The couple opened Unfurl in 2004. At the time, they owned a natural food store down the street called Mother Nature, which carried a small selection of eco-friendly clothing and goods.

After success with Mother Nature, they decided to open Unfurl. They ran both businesses for a couple of years before selling Mother Nature to focus completely on growing Unfurl.

The store specialized in hemp-based, eco-friendly clothing, which they saw as being an extension of natural food.

"If you care about what you put in your

body, you should care about also what's going into the environment because that ends up in your body eventually," Freeman said.

"At the time we opened Unfurl, cotton was the second most highly sprayed agricultural crop in the world. It adds to a lot of pollution. And that's why we also specialized in hemp, which doesn't require any pesticides."

Hemp was still taboo, so the store became a conversation starter, Moore said.

Over the years, their business has evolved as a niche for quality, eco-friendly clothing and goods that are made to last.

They hope to promote mindful purchases and start conversations about buying clothing that promotes environmental sustainability.

"With the holidays coming up, we're trying to think of stocking stuffers that aren't just a waste of material," Freeman said. "Something that would be kind of a conversation piece and actually maybe make people aware of, 'Oh, yeah, how can I use less plastic in my daily life?'"

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Port to repair marinas

Agency could reopen East Mooring Basin

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Astorian

The Port of Astoria is piecing together a plan to reopen the ailing East Mooring Basin to pedestrians in the coming year and dredge the shallowing West Mooring Basin over the next three years.

The Port contracted with the Port of Ilwaco last year to dredge the West Mooring Basin, where silting has left many of the slips high and dry during low tides. But Ilwaco's dredge only removed about half of the expected sediment and opened less than a third of the intended slips, requiring private mediation between the two ports to avoid a lawsuit.

The Port budgeted \$150,000 this year to dredge the West Mooring Basin and went out to bid for a private contractor to finish the entire basin over multiple years, receiving three proposals. Astoria-based Bergerson Construction came back with a bid of less than \$1.2 million — between nearly \$1 million to \$2 million cheaper than its competitors — to dredge the entire marina and will likely receive the contract.

Matt McGrath, the Port's director of operations, said he is confident Bergerson will be effective. The company recently acquired a dredge specifically to service small harbors and marinas like the Port's.

Bergerson has done work in Newport and Westport, Washington. It recently received a contract to dredge the Hammond Marina for Warrenton during this year's dredging window starting next month. Dredging at the West Mooring Basin would be spread out over two dredge windows starting in November 2020 and 2021.

"The hope is to just take the (\$150,000) we had from this year's budget for the dredging of the West Mooring Basin ... and put it toward repairs on the causeway," McGrath said of the East Mooring Basin. "We're hoping that will open pedestrian access."

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