

Tsunami zone: Each community in the county is different in layout

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his city building any new public safety facilities in places where they could be flooded in a tsunami.

However, Jones noted the state is in a transitional period in preparing for a potential Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake and the tsunami that's expected to follow. He said he sees the new law as part of that process, not the final word.

"There's a lot of work going on with the state right now, so we're going to let this process play out," he said. "Building public awareness and encouraging members of the community to have their own preparedness plan and supplies is an ongoing challenge, but I hope that in 2020 the city will focus more on preparation and resilience."

Warrenton Mayor Henry Balensifer said he doesn't think Warrenton would start developing new facilities in the tsunami area, but there are many factors to consider when deciding where to build, such as expense and accessibility.

Warrenton's police department, fire department and city hall are located inside the inundation zone.

"The fire station isn't likely to be moved because most of the firefighters live in that area," Balensifer said. "If there was a major tsunami, you'd have to consider whether the volun-



Clatsop Community College is out of the inundation zone and a temporary assembly area in a tsunami.

Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

teer firefighters would even make it to the facility. Most of what the city of Warrenton would be responding to would be underwater."

He added the city has almost maxed out its ability to develop east of U.S. Highway 101, so in the future he'd be interested in expanding the city limits to include higher ground further east.

According to Balensifer,

the intent of the new law is to allow public buildings to be constructed in towns that don't have land outside the tsunami or landslide zones.

"It wasn't designed to open the floodgates of emergency services to be built in the tsunami area, it was to enable exceptions," he said.

But Gearhart Mayor Matt Brown said the original ban already built in

didn't have other options.

"I don't really understand why Gov. Brown changed the law because you could always get an exception if you didn't have an area above the tsunami line to build," he said.

Before the repeal, Gearhart had already been working with the state Department of Land Conservation & Development to amend its codes and ensure

future critical infrastructure is built at high enough elevations.

"So even though the state got rid of it, we've had it in our city code," Brown said. "That being said, even within our code there are also exceptions."

Chad Sweet, Gearhart's city administrator, added the city plans to relocate its fire station to a place above 60 feet but still within a

close enough range to be able to respond to everyday calls.

"Not allowing fire departments or police departments in tsunami inundation zones sounds like a good idea initially, yet taking it away from people who need it could create problems in everyday life," he said.

Each community in Clatsop County is different in its layout and exposure to potential tsunamis, so Sweet said maybe the state should provide a framework for preparedness and let each city make its own decisions.

Disaster resilience

Sarah Nebeker, the chairwoman of the county Board of Commissioners, said she thinks the repeal is a good start to look at the future safety of the county's public buildings.

"I understand this is not easy, there's all kinds of issues with it," she said. "But we see what happened with Seaside passing a bond to move the schools, so we see when people come together things work out."

Nebeker said she's not aware of any new county buildings to be constructed in the tsunami zone. She added that Tiffany Brown, the county's emergency manager, has been working to inform herself and the county about improving the area's disaster resilience.

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Sarah Nebeker | chairwoman of the county Board of Commissioners

Attendance: State investment to reduce absenteeism

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Almost all school districts in the county saw an increase or stability in regular attendance following state investments to reduce chronic absenteeism.

A total of 87% of Astoria students regularly made it to class on time, along with 84% in Warrenton, 82% in Knappa, 87% in Jewell and 87% statewide. Seaside, which suffered from the greatest rate of chronic absenteeism in the county, saw a 9% jump in regular attendance to 83% last year.

The Class of 2019 at Astoria High School registered a 78% on-time graduation rate last year, a 15% increase from the previous year and almost matching the statewide rate of 79%.

Warrenton High School followed with a 77% graduation rate, a 2% increase. Seaside High School saw a 6% jump to 73%.

Students in the county's two rural school districts posted the highest on-time graduation rates last year, including 94% at Knappa High School and 87% at Jewell School.

At least 85% of ninth graders last year were on track to graduate on time, including 94% at Jewell, 88% at Astoria, 87% at Knappa and 85% at Seaside and Warrenton. Local districts matched or exceeded the statewide rate of 85%, the highest in several years.

Third graders at local school districts last year struggled in English language arts competency, a key component of academic progress. Only 49% percent of Warrenton and Astoria third graders were on track in English language arts, a 20% drop for the former and a 2% drop for the latter, but higher than the statewide rate of 47%. Slightly less than one-third of Seaside third graders were on track, a 10% drop. Knappa third graders, who registered a 17% improvement last year in competency, still struggled the most with only 28% on track.

Mathematics competency also presented a challenge to last year's eighth graders, including a 6%



Schools are trying to combat chronic absenteeism.

Colin Murphey/The Astorian

drop in Warrenton to 44%, a 2% drop to 30% in Astoria and a 5% drop in Knappa to 17%. One-third of Seaside eighth graders were on track, matching their previous performance. Nearly 40% of eighth graders statewide were on track in math last year.

New information

The profiles, now in their second year, also include new information that in some cases the state hadn't previously collected or shared publicly. Schools have started tracking the number of nonbinary students. However, the reported student population is so small, state officials say it's impossible to draw conclusions about how that student population is doing.

Student mobility is also a part of this year's profiles — tracking the number of students changing schools midyear or with significant enrollment gaps.

Several of the highest mobility rates have online public charter schools in the district, including the Mitchell, Santiam Canyon and North Bend districts.

"Understanding how many students are experiencing mobility is really important because it does have an impact, in Oregon, on overall outcomes," Gill

said. "We know that the graduation rate for students who are mobile during their high school years decreases dramatically and that these are students that require extra attention and support from the district that they are being served by."

The Department of Education is now using data from the National Student Clearinghouse to illustrate how many students enroll in a two- or four-year college within a year of completing high school.

Rates increased at every Portland Public Schools high school except one — Benson Polytechnic High School, where college-going rates decreased by 4%. Using the same metric, rates at half of Salem-Keizer's high schools decreased. And in Beaverton, three high schools had decreases in college-going rates.

But college-going rates at most of the high schools in Oregon's three largest districts are above the state average of 62%.

Gill said many of the data points in these profiles will be helpful to families and school districts as they figure out how to spend funds from the Student Success Act — the \$1 billion annual fund lawmakers created by enacting a tax on commercial activity. Gill pointed out measures such as regu-

lar attendance rates, graduation rates and ninth grade on-track rates — the percentage of students who have one-fourth of the credits required to graduate by the time they finish their first year of high school.

At 85.3%, the ninth grade on-track rate was Oregon's highest in several years, an almost 1% increase from 2017-2018.

"That number is good news for Oregon students," Gill said.

Gill said that number could mean higher graduation rates in the future.

New this year, the state also asked districts for the number of licensed librarians and psychologists. Forty-four of Oregon's 197 school districts have at least one licensed librarian on staff. Sixty-two of them have at least one psychologist.

The psychologist metric could also be integral to planning around the Student Success Act. One purpose of the \$500 million going to school districts is to address students' mental and behavioral health needs.

"The school psychologist measure is another way to look at what kinds of supports do districts have available for their students," Gill said.

Edward Stratton of The Astorian contributed to this report.



Edward Stratton/The Astorian

The Port of Astoria recently erected a taller fence to better block access to the shuttered causeway at the East Mooring Basin.

Port: The hope is to reopen the causeway in the next three to six months

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The Port, following a recommendation from the state, shut down pedestrian access last year to the causeway, a bridge running between 36th Street and a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers breakwater along the Columbia River. The causeway provides vital access for the few remaining commercial boat owners at the marina and is popular with sightseers who want to view sea lions.

But enforcement has been lax, with people climbing over a short fence the agency erected to keep people out. The Port recently erected a taller, 8-foot fence

to better keep people off the causeway. The agency sent a letter to tenants granting them a key to the gate and temporary access to the causeway, but will bar all access starting in November.

When the repairs to the causeway will happen depends on when the Port hears back on a permit and hires a contractor to do the work. The hope is to reopen the causeway in the next three to six months, McGrath said.

The entire marina has been under consideration for private operation by a development group led by Pier 39 owner Floyd Holcom. That proposal has been put on hold, McGrath said.

Outpost: 'It seems like if you come to Manzanita you probably end up in our store'

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Freeman said they try to be thoughtful about business decisions. She said they don't simply want to put more "stuff" out into the world. As part of their passion for the environment, they donate 1% of their sales before taxes to local environmental nonprofits.

"It seems like if you come to Manzanita you probably end up in our store, which is why we try to have something for everyone," Freeman said.

However, like many businesses along the North Coast, they have struggled to find staff. Freeman said housing prices make it difficult for people to work in the service industry.

She said they've had staffing challenges in the past, but never as difficult as it is now. She said it means owners are having to work more in their stores and businesses stay open fewer days a week.

"We're all competing for the same workers it feels like," Freeman said.