

IN BRIEF

Seaside man sentenced for robbery

A Seaside man pleaded no contest Wednesday to robbery in the first degree, driving under the influence of intoxicants and unauthorized use of a vehicle.

Cody Charles Ford, 37, was sentenced to more than three years in prison.

In May, Ford broke into a Seaside home and stole a vehicle from a man who had recently died. The next morning, while under the influence of intoxicants, he drove the vehicle into a rock near the Tides Motel in Seaside.



Cody Charles Ford

Astoria City Councilor Brownson to hold meet and greet Saturday

Astoria City Councilor Tom Brownson is holding a "Meet Your Councilor" event at 9 a.m. on Saturday at 3 Cups Coffee, 279 W. Marine Drive.

Residents are invited to discuss city issues.

— *The Astorian*

Grants help people in Pacific County Jail

LONG BEACH, Wash. — Pacific County plans to hire three new employees to support people with mental illness and addiction while they are in the county jail and after they're released.

The new positions include a full-time mental health and substance use therapist in Pacific County Jail and two community reentry liaisons, one based in North County and one in South County.

The positions are funded by two federal grants worth \$1.7 million.

— *Chinook Observer*

DEATHS

Oct. 23, 2019

TODD, Mary Bridget Haunani, 59, of Astoria, died in Astoria. Caldwell's Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

Oct. 21, 2019

McAVOY, Patricia Mary, 85, of Astoria died

in Astoria. Caldwell's Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

MOWREY, Sylvia H., 105, of Astoria, died in Astoria. Caldwell's Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

BIRTHS

Oct. 7, 2019

CHRISTENSEN, Brianna and Ryan, of Astoria, a boy, Cole Ripath Christensen, born at Columbia Memorial Hospital in Astoria. Older sister is Rhiannon Christensen. Grandparents are Dawn and Troy Malcolm, Clancie Adams and Terry

Christensen, all of Astoria.

Sept. 16, 2019

GAUTHIER, Tanya, and KOONS, Rocky, of Astoria, a boy, Byrson R. Koons, born at Columbia Memorial Hospital. Grandparents are Phil and Kari Gauthier, of Astoria, Julie Smith-Koons and Russ Koons.

MEMORIALS

Friday Oct. 25

LENDE, Russell "Russ" Sr. — Graveside service at 1 p.m., Evergreen Cemetery, 33540 Beerman Creek Road in Seaside. Lende, 81, of Seaside, died Sunday, Oct. 20, 2019, in Seaside. Hughes-Ransom Mor-

tuary is in charge of the arrangements.

Sunday, Oct. 27

MATHRE, Steven Ray "Mathe" — Celebration of life from 1 to 4 p.m., Big Valley Woods Community Center, 32700 S.E. Leewood Lane in Boring.

CORRECTION

Position incorrect — Steve Fick was not on the Astoria Planning Commission a decade ago as stated in an A1 story Saturday. He was on a committee working on the Riverfront Vision Plan a decade ago, but served on the Planning Commission prior to that.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

THURSDAY

Sunset Empire Transportation District Board, 9 a.m., Astoria Transit Center Conference Room, 900 Marine Drive.
Columbia River Estuary

Study Taskforce Council, 12 p.m., 818 Commercial Street, Suite 203.

Astoria City Council, 7 p.m., work session, City Hall, 1095 Duane St.

Buyers need to take a hard look at Gearhart Elementary School

Some suggest a fire station

By R.J. MARX
The Astorian

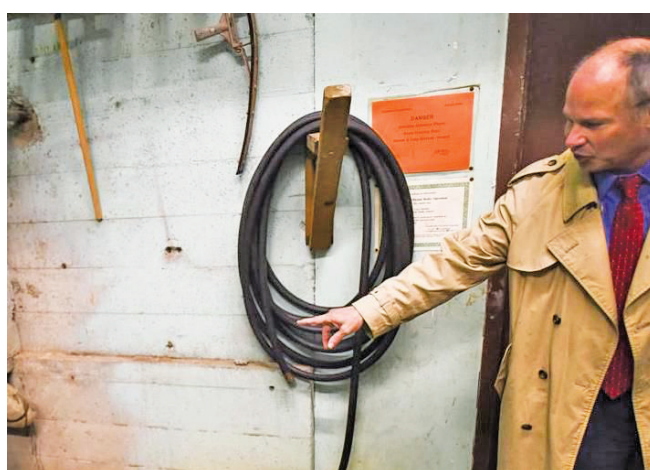
GEARHART — Buyers are taking a hard look at the Seaside School District's three properties — Gearhart Elementary School, Broadway Middle School and Seaside High School — each built with an expected lifespan of 45 to 50 years.

In a tour of Gearhart Elementary before the bond vote in 2016, Doug Dougherty, an advocate of a new campus and Seaside school superintendent at the time, pointed out water pipes in narrow, unlit tunnels. Maintenance workers holding flashlights needed to shimmy or crawl as far as 250 feet to locate leaks and then hammer through concrete to reach encased pipes.

Sections have not been replaced since the elementary school was built in 1949.

The three schools are each about equal in disrepair, Dougherty said, but Gearhart students have no way to evacuate to high ground.

Since that time, crews have done routine maintenance — polishing floors, painting and doing exterior work to keep pests at bay — but have not focused any major repairs.



Doug Dougherty, of the Seaside School District, shows the conditions at Gearhart Elementary School in 2016.

There has also been ongoing maintenance on building systems — boiler and water heater work are the most recent, Jim Henry, the building project manager for the school district, said.

"Admittedly I'm not that familiar with Gearhart Elementary School, but the 'crumbling schools' titles have my attention," Henry said in reference to 2016 news stories. "Given the age of the schools and coastal location it's not surprising. It's not unusual for prebend articles — these are September and October 2016 — to highlight the worst-case scenarios to bolster voter support."

The Gearhart campus sits on 8.4 acres one block west of the intersection of U.S. Highway 101 and Pacific Way.

"The main building has classic large classrooms with a large central hallway featuring natural sunlight through countertop-to-ceiling glass windows," Norris & Stevens, co-representing the school district with Popkin Real Estate, wrote in a description of the property. "The four outer buildings are staged around the main building for specialty classrooms."

Listed at \$1.9 million, the campus offers workout facilities with a full gymnasium, plus covered basketball courts outside. Baseball, soccer and softball fields and two bark-chipped outdoor play areas offer recreational opportunities.

Since the early 2000s, Gearhart firefighters have asked the city to replace the fire station, a building con-

structed in 1958 considered unsafe in an earthquake or tsunami. A 2006 bond measure for a new public safety building failed at the polls.

Gearhart's Jack Zimmerman would like to see the city reconsider the school as a possibility for the proposed Gearhart Fire Station, now targeted at what is known as the High Point site on North Marion.

"At this point in time the Gearhart school has become, in my opinion, an increasing catalyst dividing the community between the proposed fire station and the school's future," Zimmerman wrote in a guest column for the Seaside Signal.

City Administrator Chad Sweet said the city's firehouse committee looked at the school as a potential site and knocked it off the table as an option. "It was not considered because its elevation is 17 feet — our current station is at 27 feet."

The land is close to the aquifer, making the location susceptible to subsidence, Sweet said.

"During winter storms the area floods in part because of the small creek to the east of the property," he said. "These are many of the same reasons the school district is moving the school out. The public would lose trust in its city officials if they put a fire station in such a location."

Boys and Girls Club abruptly closes in Long Beach

Parents are left scrambling

By ALYSSA EVANS
Chinook Observer

LONG BEACH, Wash. — Starting Friday, Jen Downing, a mother of four, will be left to figure out Plan B for child care.

Downing and several other parents are directly impacted by a last-minute closure of the Long Beach Peninsula Boys and Girls Club.

Last week, the club announced on its Facebook page that it would permanently close on Thursday. The decision has left parents scrambling.

"This is a big hit. How am I supposed to work if I need to pick up my kids at 2:45 p.m.?" Downing said. "I don't know what to do."

A second child care option isn't all parents are looking for after the club's announcement. Parents want answers.

"If you didn't have social media or word of mouth, you'd have no idea this is happening," said Michelle Binion, a mother of two and Ocean Beach School District board director.

"When was the meeting? Where are the minutes? As a school board member, I know everything should be transparent and documented," she said.

When contacted about the upcoming closure, Boys and Girls Club Executive Director Jennifer Magneson was only willing to answer questions via email. Mag-



Mya Cunningham, 12, poses with money she is donating to create an after-school program for students.

neson didn't specify when the club's board made the decision.

"The board decided to close the club after all known options to secure the necessary funds to continue safely running the programs were exhausted," she said.

The club's annual budget is \$191,000, Magneson said. She was unable to provide any estimate on how much money the club needs to operate.

"Our goal is to secure funds to sustain ongoing club operations," Magneson said.

Magneson and others on the club's board asked for community donations in the Oct. 9 edition of the Chinook Observer. Donations received by the club, as well as membership fees paid by parents, won't be refunded, Magneson said.

Club employees also won't receive severance pay.

"Did you let us pay your last payroll knowing this would happen?" Bin-

ion questioned. "Where are the kids going to go? The community deserves an explanation."

"We are doing everything possible to find the resources needed to continue to provide our members with a positive and sustainable place for them to go after school each day," Magneson said.

Yet many parents offered differing thoughts.

Jennifer Burr, a single mom, uses the club. She said club staff aren't answering any questions.

"The one-week notice seems so rash," she said. "It's disturbing they're giving no answers."

Burr was able to get a spot at Peninsula Church Center for her child.

"I got a slot but can that day care take on 70 kids? Probably not," she said. "I don't know what else to do. I wouldn't be able to work without child care."

The church center has room for about three more children, said Lorraine Brown, the child care director.

Kelly Frech, owner of Blue Crab Graphics, made T-shirts for the club until former club director Allie Bair left the organization in March. Since Bair's departure, Frech hasn't heard anything from the club.

"It doesn't seem like there was any effort to fundraise," Frech said. "This doesn't happen overnight. They're one of the most supported groups on the peninsula. How did this slip through without any effort to stop it?"

Frech, and many others, said they'd be willing to donate to keep the program running. Many parents also said they'd be willing to pay higher fees if it would help

the club. Parents pay \$50 per child, per year. The price is twice as high as previous years. Low-income families aren't required to pay the annual fee.

When Mya Cunningham, 12, learned about the club's upcoming closure, she wanted to help save the club. Cunningham gathered her summer clam-raking earnings and a rose she'd received on her 11th birthday. After attaching a note stating "I love BGC," Cunningham gave the money and rose to her mom, Katie, for the club. Mya's generosity may be part of an effort that leads to a replacement for the Boys and Girls Club.

Since Mya's efforts, residents gathered to start a fund for another after-school program.

The fund is named "The Martha and Mya After-school Fund." The name honors both Mya and Martha Murfin, who founded the Coastal Alliance for Youth, which later became the Boys and Girls Club.

Since the fund went public on Monday, over \$6,000 has been raised. The fund, which is managed by the South Pacific County Community Foundation, needs to reach \$100,000 before being operable.

"Last Friday, we had a genesis of people getting together, asking what do we do and how do we do this," said Tiffany Turner, who brought the group together. "We got together to make sure people's money is safeguarded."

Turner and her husband, Brady, are co-owners of Adrift Hospitality. She also serves on the Ocean Beach school board.

If the fund doesn't reach \$100,000, money will be reimbursed to donors.

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