

Cove Beach: Board says decisions are data-driven

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“The water moratorium is absolutely to stop the progress of development,” said Sharyl Magnuson, a property owner and local physician.

Magnuson grew up in North Tillamook County, but upon returning to the coast she said she has felt unwelcomed in the neighborhood. She said there has been a lot of rancor between the board, some long-time homeowners and lot owners seeking to build homes.

Magnuson said she tried to obtain a building permit several months before the moratorium went into effect, but said she was told by the water district they were about to declare a moratorium so they would not give her access to water.

She and her husband decided to pay an additional \$50,000 for a rain catchment system so they could obtain a building permit and build their home.

“What he was saying was a lot of misdirection and subtle falsehoods,” Magnuson said about Dice after the meeting. “They tapped into a major aquifer with that first well, it should take care of a community 10 times this size. There’s no need to keep the water moratorium going.”

Guido Paparoni, a lot owner with a Ph.D. in economic geology, filed a public records request to access the data the water district used to come to their conclusion.

He and his wife, Margaret Rozendaal, who has a Ph.D. in climate science, decided to use their expertise to examine the data themselves.

They concluded there is no water shortage.

David Livermore, a hydrogeologist and longtime homeowner came to

the same conclusion as Paparoni.

The report was discussed at the October meeting. Dice said Paparoni’s report was not accurate, valid or pertinent.

Dice said the board’s decisions are data-driven and transparent.

Some people suggested creating a website or another digital document storage tool so people can have access to data, minutes and meeting notices.

“The board isn’t interested in doing that,” Dice said about a website. “We don’t have the skills, we don’t have the expertise.”

He said if people want to see their data, reports or other information they need to file a formal public records request.

In response to requests for teleconferencing, Dice said teleconferencing is against their board’s policy.

During public comment, several homeowners expressed their concerns about new development and especially short term rentals. Many thanked the water district for their work.

“The objective and primary concern of our water board is for the supply of safe, clean, drinking water to our entire community and that means to the residents of our community. The people who actually live here day in, day out,” Dice said.

“They don’t have second, or third, or fourth homes in Portland or Lake Oswego or West Linn or other places. They live here full time and they expect to get water when they turn on the tap 24/7 just like everybody else expects. So, while we’re empathetic with the property owners who have had a climp in their personal plans, or their financial plans, it is unfortunately what it is.”



Photos by Adrian Tuohy

Researchers are experimenting with fish traps on the Columbia River.

Fish trap: ‘We’ll be looking at survival of bycatch’

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“We’ll be looking at survival of bycatch so that researchers know the impact on fish we tag and have good research and results,” Tuohy said.

Bycatch is a term for other fish and marine animals that are accidentally caught while fishing for a different species. In this case, the researchers want to make sure endangered and threatened populations of wild salmon are released from the nets safely.

“Gillnets and other conventional harvest techniques don’t really release bycatch very well so whatever you catch you often kill,” Tuohy said. “So when researchers are trying to collect data we want to have the lowest-impact tool so we can release the fish unharmed.”

Fish traps were banned in Washington state in the 1930s and in Oregon in the 1940s. It was a time when corporations in Washington were using fish traps and overharvesting, causing salmon populations to plummet.

“They were very efficient for catching fish and the quality was greater because it didn’t harm fish, but they were not being selective,” Tuohy said. “Everybody started pointing their fingers at fish traps, so they were banned.”

However, fisheries are heavily regulated now compared to back then.



One of the issues researchers are looking at is the survival of bycatch.

Inside the trap, fish swim through a maze of walls and compartments to an area where they can be identified and tagged. The researchers or fishermen can open a compartment and let the bycatch swim free.

Washington has started the process to legalize fish traps. Oregon has already changed its regulations on fish traps, but hasn’t yet put them into practice.

But before making any conclusions about this net, there are many factors to consider, according to John North, Columbia River fisheries manager at the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

“It all sounds good, but when you get out in practice and implement it, people have run into challenges,” North said.

He listed factors researchers need to think about, such

as the mortality rate of the released fish, the types of fish caught and released, the amount of fish and the cost of operating this kind of gear.

The mortality rate of released fish is not enough information in itself, North added, as it needs to be paired with the total numbers of fish. If only 10 fish are released but they all die, that 100% mortality rate shouldn’t be compared to a 10% mortality rate in a case when 100 out of 1,000 fish die.

North said testing these nets in multiple locations will help researchers find out if they’re more or less effective at different sites.

“This new site will certainly give us new information,” North said.

In Oregon, the traps will be used for research. Separately in Washington, the Wild Fish Conservancy has already been testing alterna-

tive gear to be used in commercial fisheries.

Derek Ormer, the national bycatch program coordinator with NOAA Fisheries, said the project in Washington has been successful so far.

“Between the two programs we’re looking to increase the harvest of hatchery fish while releasing the majority of the wild population, while providing hatchery fish to the restaurant chain,” Ormer said.

Ormer added the pound nets are new for commercial fishermen, as they haven’t been allowed in the Columbia River for so many decades. North said some fishermen are reluctant to change their methods, which are already regulated.

But to Tuohy, using this type of trap is worth the change.

“There’s a lot of fish populations that aren’t doing well,” Tuohy said. “If you don’t have another tool, you’re almost out of business because the damage you cause to those threatened and endangered species will shut you down.”

Tuohy said the experimental net is planned to go on the Oregon side of the Columbia next year.

“This is a research project and I sincerely hope people understand that and don’t jump to conclusions that while we’re doing research we’re harvesting fish, because that simply isn’t true,” Tuohy said.



Edward Stratton/The Astorian

The city of Astoria has public bathrooms downtown near 13th and Exchange streets, to which it restricts access at night, but has also installed port-a-potties at 16th and Ninth streets near the Astoria Riverwalk.

Bathrooms: Loos would likely be placed at the same location as the port-a-potties

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“We’ll publicize it in the community as this great thing that these business owners have done for the community by making their restrooms open to the public, and let’s recruit other ... we’ll call them potty partners,” he said.

Sarah Lu Heath, executive director of the Astoria Downtown Historic District Association, said the Port of Astoria also needs to take more responsibility for the crush of tourists brought in on cruise ships. She also called on the city to increase funding for maintenance to keep existing bathrooms open longer.

The city has looked at building a new permanent bathroom along the riverwalk, focusing on a Portland Loo, a permanent, stainless steel bathroom resistant to vandalism. But the unit can cost upward of \$150,000 to buy and install, plus more than \$20,000 a year in maintenance.

The group on Thursday approached a consensus around the Portland Loo as a

compromise between better quality than a portable bathroom but a lower expense than a brick-and-mortar building. The loos would likely be placed at the same location as the port-a-potties.

City Councilors warned to the idea of pursuing more partnerships with private businesses, expanding maintenance of existing bathrooms and pursuing a new permanent bathroom or two along the riverwalk if funding can be found.

They talked about using Promote Astoria tourism funds and other grants to find money for a new permanent bathroom. Councilor Roger Rocka raised the possibility of federal grants for bathrooms frequented by the homeless.

Clatsop County recently passed a 1% lodging tax increase to help pay for the operations of a new jail. The city is forecast to receive about \$114,000 annually from the increased taxes starting next summer, said City Manager Brett Estes, and many of the asks have been around improving the bathroom situation.

Knudsen: Wants to find out what community is into

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could no longer speak. Knudsen had learned some American Sign Language to communicate with deaf children in church and helped her friend communicate, kindling her pursuit for a new career.

She went to college to be an educational interpreter for deaf children. But during her practicum, Knudsen decided she wanted to teach rather than just interpret for deaf students. She earned a bachelor’s degree in English with teaching credentials and got her first job as an English teacher with her high school alma mater in Stevens Point, Wisconsin.

Knudsen was working as a librarian and English teacher at a youth prison in Wisconsin when the jail received a semi truck trailer of books from two nearby facilities that closed down. A librarian who worked with Knudsen’s mom, a library assistant, came to help organize the collection.

“She said, ‘Really, you’re good at this. Maybe you should think about getting your master’s of library science,’” Knudsen said.

That spurred Knudsen to earn a master’s degree online while working full-time. She left the prison in 2015 after complaining and testifying as part of a John Doe probe into the abuse of students there and took a librarian position with the nearby Wausau School District.

While in Wausau, Knudsen noticed her son, a sophomore in high school, was failing classes and needed a tutor, but she didn’t have much money. Her son is part Potawatomi and Ho-Chunk,

two native tribes of Wisconsin, and Knudsen remembered there being free tutoring available for tribal members.

She reached out to a non-profit incubator, learned to write grants and eventually secured one from the local Potawatomi to help open the American Indian Resource Center in a local church. The center partnered with the school district, hiring tutors, offering feeding programs and helping kids get YMCA memberships.

Knudsen and her husband, Eric, were longtime friends from Wisconsin who married after having kids in separate relationships, her one and him two. After their children left for college, they moved to Portland, and she became a librarian at David Douglas High School.

The couple dreamed of moving to the Oregon Coast — Knudsen has a tattoo sleeve of sea life down one arm — and started looking for local jobs. She was one of nearly 20 candidates for the job at Warrenton’s library, which recently relocated from a dilapidated building near Hammond to the former Serendipity Caffe on Main Avenue.

Knudsen hopes to expand programs at the library for older adults and teens. She wants to bring in people from marginalized populations, such as Native Americans, and promote the area’s history.

But a library is a continually growing organism formed by the community’s needs and wants, she said. “Finding out what the community is interested in and what they want from their library, that’s my biggest thing.”



Edward Stratton/The Astorian

Warrenton Mayor Henry Balensifer, left, honored former librarian Nettie-Lee Calog, who recently retired from directing the Warrenton Community Library.

In observance of Thanksgiving

the Astorian

will be closed
Thanksgiving Day
November 28th

The Thanksgiving edition will be delivered Wednesday, November 27th