

Dark Arts is Astoria's hottest Black Friday sale

Tickets sold out in 30 minutes

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Astorian

Ticket's for Astoria's hottest Black Friday item — all 2,400 of them — sold out in less than 30 minutes this year.

Fort George Brewery's Festival of the Dark Arts, which takes over its entire Duane Street campus the third Saturday each February, has gone from an obscure fundraiser for the arts to one of the region's most sought-after beer festivals.

Jack Harris, co-owner of Fort George, first held the event in 2000 and 2002 as a fundraiser for Astoria Visual Arts.

"I was working at Bill's Tavern" in Can-

non Beach, Harris said. "I always wanted to throw a stout festival. I was kind of looking for a little group that could use a fundraiser."

The festival started out at the foot of 10th Street with 10 to 12 stouts, which Harris drove all around the Pacific Northwest to collect, and around 200 attendees. It featured a macabre-themed art show and fire dancers, a staple of the event's entertainment.

Fort George revived Dark Arts in 2011 after buying the Fort George and Lovell buildings from their former landlord, Robert Stricklin. The festival takes over the entire campus, with dark-themed artists and stout-pouring stations spread over both floors of the Fort George Building, an upstairs garden along Exchange Street, a

downstairs courtyard on Duane Street and a gallery and taproom in the Lovell Building.

"Beer festivals are really boring, if you go to a lot of them," Harris said. "This was really at the heart of it. We're trying to be the opposite of a beer festival, and really be engaging with people and have lots of really interesting, hands-on things to do. The dark thing has always been a tongue-in-cheek sort of aspect of it."

Attendance steadily swelled. At least 2,500 people attended Dark Arts 2014, braving 60-mph wind gusts and more than an inch of rain. After the onslaught, Fort George capped attendance to keep the experience enjoyable. Over the last several years, the event has sold out faster and faster.

"It's kind of gone from about five days,

to five hours, to 25 minutes," said Brian Bovenizer, marketing director for Fort George. "It's about the most in-demand beer festival in the region."

This year, Fort George sold 2,000 all-day tickets and 400 "Twilight" passes for people to attend after 6 p.m., when the initial wave of drinkers thins out. It has resisted calls to hold the event multiple days and take it on the road to larger venues in Portland and Seattle.

"Half the draw is being able to go from building to building and room to room, and across the courtyard and upper (Fernhill) Glass area," Harris said of the brewery's campus. "It's just kind of this discovery."

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Seafood restaurant, public dock planned at new waterfront hotel



Photos by Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Tiffany Turner, of Adrift Hospitality, left, and Luke Colvin, from Buoy Beer Co., stand in the abandoned fish processing plant that will soon become the Bowline Hotel.

Managed by Adrift and Buoy Beer

By EDWARD STRATTON
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Earlier this year, the Astoria Planning Commission approved the new 39-room Bowline Hotel at a former seafood processing plant just east of Buoy Beer Co.

The partners behind the hotel are now preparing for a public area and fine seafood restaurant at the foot of Ninth Street after receiving permission from the City Council earlier this month.

Bowline Investors, the group

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The former icehouse sits on the same property adjacent to the old fish processing plant and will hold a new high-end seafood restaurant.

Development rules crafted downtown

Recommendations to City Council

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Astorian

The Astoria Planning Commission this week unanimously forwarded a more liberal set of development rules in the downtown core to the City Council for approval.

The Urban Core includes downtown and waterfront properties between Second and 16th streets. It is the last of four sections of the city's Riverfront Vision Plan guiding development along the Columbia River. The City Council has approved new development rules for Bridge Vista in Uniontown, the Civic Greenway east of downtown and the Neighborhood Greenway in Alderbrook.

While the other areas of the Riverfront Vision Plan were more restricted, planning commissioners leaned toward denser, more allowable development downtown.

Astoria has experienced a backlash against large chain hotels since the approval by the City Council of a four-story Fairfield Inn and Suites, a Marriott franchise, near the former Ship Inn restaurant.

The proposed rules limit development over piling fields and existing piers to the height of the riverbank to protect views, while allowing redevelopment of existing waterfront buildings.

Planning commissioners kept a prohibition on new hotels over the water, but reached a consensus to allow new hotels over water as a conditional use in existing structures. They also agreed property owners should be allowed to expand those buildings within the city's height and mass restrictions.

They proposed building height restrictions of 28 feet over water in nonlimitation zones. Buildings on the river could rise to 35 feet for water-dependent uses, or with narrower widths higher up.

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New park named in Warrenton

Memorial plaza is downtown improvement centerpiece

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Astorian

WARRENTON — The Warrenton Memorial Plaza will be the name of the city's new park at the corner of Main Avenue and Harbor Drive. The Warrenton City Commission unanimously approved the name Tuesday.

The park, located next to the Warrenton Post Office, has gone by the name Post Office Park in reference to

its location, and by Flag Park, with the flag of each military branch on display.

Big River Construction has been constructing the park over the last month around a veterans memorial dedicated last year by the local Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 10580.

The city's Parks Advisory Board petitioned the public to vote on a new name for Post Office Park and came back with four options: Warrenton City Memorial Park, Appreciation Memorial Park, Hero's Appreciation Park and Warrenton Memorial Plaza, which gathered 20 of the 50 votes cast.

Commissioner Mark Baldwin was surprised at the city getting so few votes, as was Mayor Henry Balensifer. The naming campaign was not publicized on social media.

"I feel like there's more public outreach to do about this, not that I have

a problem with the name," Balensifer said.

But city commissioners Rick Newton and Pam Ackley agreed that Warrenton Memorial Plaza sounds classy, and that the result would not change with an extended voting period.

"I feel Warrenton Memorial Plaza says everything we want to say," Ackley said.

Despite his reservations about the process, Balensifer agreed that Warrenton Memorial Park was a much-needed improvement over the more literal Post Office Park.

"That's not a very inspiring name," he said.

The .3-acre park is the centerpiece of a downtown beautification project in Warrenton stretching from the post office south to Warrenton High School.



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Post Office Park, located at the intersection of Harbor Drive and Main Avenue, will be renamed Warrenton Memorial Plaza.



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