

Homeless camps a burden on Warrenton



Trash and old furniture litters private property behind Goodwill in Warrenton.

Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Trash, fires pose danger

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

WARRENTON — The city is struggling to guard vacant property against homeless camps and illegal activity.

Police recently found private property behind Goodwill in wreckage. Garbage, clothes, used needles and other items are strewn throughout the more than 11 acres.

Around the same time, there were three fires within a 24-hour period at camps on vacant land, including the property behind Goodwill. A man living in a camp on the property was cited for reckless burning.

Clatsop County has also been dealing with a significant amount of debris left over from camps at the North Coast Business Park, which is located next to the private lot behind Goodwill.

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Astoria, Warrenton meet in the middle on housing

Push for more affordable units

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Astorian

Astoria and Warrenton are on track to allow a denser, more diverse array of housing in single-family neighborhoods.

A countywide housing study showed a lack of affordable workforce housing. Since then, cities have been trying to diversify the region's housing stock through code, zoning and other changes in building rules.

Changes have also been driven by the passage of state House Bill 2001, which essentially abandoned single-family

zoning in cities with more than 10,000 people to promote the development of duplexes, row houses, cottage clusters, stacked flats and accessory dwelling units where only stand-alone homes were once allowed. The new law also eliminated owner occupancy, parking and minimum lot size requirements for accessory dwelling units. Cities must implement the rules by the end of next year.

"We cannot treat an accessory dwelling unit any differently than a single-family dwelling," said Astoria City Planner Barbara Fryer, who is writing standards after the Planning Commission recently

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'I DON'T KNOW HOW TO RESOLVE IT. IT'S A VERY DIFFICULT PROBLEM FROM PHYSICAL LOGISTICS TO MANPOWER.'

Warrenton Police Chief Mathew Workman

Developers show interest in property at business park

Hospital moving forward with purchase

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

Columbia Memorial Hospital in Astoria is moving forward with purchasing property at the North Coast Business Park in Warrenton.

The hospital signed a purchase agreement with Clatsop County last year for the nearly 8-acre property located between 19th Street and Ensign Lane.

A Columbia Memorial spokeswoman said they are in the due diligence phase and anticipate closing prior to the deadline at the end of June.

The hospital intends to use the property for expansion of its outpatient services.

Columbia Memorial opened a care clinic in the Warrenton Highlands shopping center in 2013. The number of visits at the clinic has climbed rapidly over the years.

Ben Doney, the owner of Ben's Computer Store in Warrenton, has expressed interest in the centerpiece property in the business park.

Several projects pitched for the business park have fallen through, including a data center and a distribution center for Fort George Brewery.

Moving forward, county staff wants to bring in a real estate firm to help market property at the business park to potential developers.

The county also intends on using the firm to negotiate property transactions for future expansions like a new public works location.

County Manager Don Bohn said having a team to help the county seems like the best path.

Warrenton hires new fire chief

Alsburyserved as volunteer firefighter

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Astorian

WARRENTON — Brian Alsbury, an assistant fire chief with the Warrenton Fire Department, is the city's new fire chief.

Alsbury replaces Tim Demers, who led the department since 2013 but resigned in October as the city faced a state investigation over unsafe firefighting practices.

"We are excited to welcome Chief Alsbury to our leadership team," City Manager Linda Engbretson said in a news release.

Alsbury, 40, has been a volunteer with the fire department since 2007. He started out in college as a volunteer with the Astoria Fire Department. After starting a family and buying a house in Warrenton, Alsbury thought his firefighting days were over.

"One day, just shortly after we moved in, I was headed to work and the fire truck drove past my house. And they were going to pick a kid up to take him to school. He had won a coloring contest. And I saw it and was like, '... I've got to be involved still.' I missed this. This is what I need to do."

He met with Ted Ames, the Warrenton fire chief at the time, and applied to be a volunteer. Now Alsbury, who works for the city's Public Works Department, will take over Dec. 23 for Ames, who came out of retirement to fill in after Demers' resignation.

"I had some good push from the outside, and I thought to myself, 'You know, this is something that I really do want,'" Alsbury said. "Something I've wanted, but didn't think the time was best for me."

Alsbury was one of 15 applicants and

Knappa teacher runs for county commission

Bangs interested in Sullivan's post

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

A Knappa teacher is the first candidate to emerge for a seat on the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners in the May election.

Courtney Bangs, 40, is running for District 4, which covers

eastern Astoria to Westport.

Commissioner Kathleen Sullivan, who was elected in 2016, represents the district. Sullivan has not publicly announced whether she will campaign for another four-year term, but she is expected to run.

Commissioner Sarah Nebeker, who represents District 2, which covers Gearhart and Clatsop Plains and portions of Seaside and Warrenton, is also up for reelection next year.

Bangs lives in Knappa with her husband and their three children. She is a teacher and earned



Courtney Bangs

a master's degree in agricultural education from Oregon State University. She teaches preschool at Immanuel Community Preschool in Knappa. She also coaches tumbling and dance at a local dance studio.

"I started paying pretty close attention to what was going on around me politically in the last legislative session," she said. "It really brought home to me the need for our rural communities to have a voice, especially in our natural resources industries and our small business sector. And

the fact that our jobs matter here and our families matter."

Bangs said her two loves are education and natural resources.

"I've been teaching or coaching for 22 years ... that's most of my life where I've just been invested in kids. And so education is a real passion," she said. "But with that comes the need for money, and the need for industry, and the need for tax revenue that comes from them."

Bangs said she would have made different decisions on some key points regarding natural resources.

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