



Edward Stratton/The Astorian
Brian Alsbury, a volunteer with the Warrenton Fire Department since 2007, has been hired as fire chief.

Fire chief: Department includes more than 20 volunteer firefighters

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seven finalists. He interviewed with three panels of technical staff, city administration and fellow volunteer firefighters. The Warrenton Fire Department includes more than 20 volunteer firefighters, one paid firefighter and a training officer in addition to the fire chief. The department covers the city and provides services to Fort Stevens State Park, Camp Rilea Armed Forces Training Center and the Astoria Regional Airport. Before Demers' resignation, the state Occupational Safety and Health

Administration received an anonymous complaint about safety issues and opened an investigation. The complaint alleged the fire department did not hold required safety meetings, maintain safety information or require proper training and equipment for firefighters. It further alleged that Demers stored expired and turned-in prescription drugs in his office without locking up or otherwise controlling them. Engbretson has said the city will soon receive the findings from the investigation and expects to face fines.

Teacher: ‘I can’t sit on the sidelines anymore’

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She said she was disappointed that Commissioner Mark Kujala was the only commissioner to write a letter asking state Sen. Betsy Johnson, D-Scappoose, to oppose House Bill 2020, the cap-and-trade proposal. “I would have written my name right down with Mark Kujala in saying, ‘No, I don’t think this is a good idea for our community and for the industries in our community,’” Bangs said. Although she said she is continuing to learn about the timber lawsuit several counties filed against the state, she is concerned the commission’s vote to opt out of the suit was not in the best interest of the county. A Linn County jury found in favor of the counties, which allege the state has not maximized timber harvests in state forests, but the \$1.1 billion verdict will likely be appealed. “I do truly feel like \$200 million for our community is quite a loss,” Bangs

said. “That could have gone towards our infrastructure, towards our school districts, towards a lot of different things. We have needs here in this community and I really feel like that fiduciary loss, that financial loss, is pretty huge.” Sullivan and Nebeker both voted to opt out of the lawsuit. “It was eye-opening to me and I felt that our rural communities needed a stronger voice that really fought for our natural resources-related jobs,” Bangs said. Bangs said she wants to be an advocate for the future of children in the county and local natural resource industry jobs. “We’re currently raising the fourth generation on the family property, and this is an investment of the heart,” she said. “I’m actively involved and I love my community and I hope it shows. “I can’t sit on the sidelines anymore and just watch,” Bangs said. “I need to do something.”

Housing: City may allow more housing options

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took up the issue. While planning commissioners did not like the idea of shipping container or RV-style tiny homes, they were supportive of smaller, modular, manufactured and other tiny homes without a minimum size, Fryer said. “The general consensus was that if somebody wanted to propose a 100-square-foot (unit) and was willing to live in it, that would be OK if it met building code requirements for amount of space,” she said. “We had one person testify that they wanted to live in a 150-square-foot tiny home, because that’s all they could afford.”

The countywide housing study and state recommended allowing both internal and detached accessory dwelling units, potentially creating three individual living spaces in and around a single home. But planning commissioners, worried about traffic, thought homes should only include either an internal or detached dwelling unit, not both, she said. The Planning Commission also looked at an updated definition for single-room occupancy — multiple people renting individual rooms but sharing amenities in a larger housing unit — beyond rules allowing five unrelated people in one structure, Fryer said. The changes would clear the way for more cooperative housing like quads or boarding houses. The Norblad Hotel, for example, offers a similar monthly rental of rooms that share bathroom and kitchen spaces. The city is “looking at where we might permit those types of products, and how we might allow them — what are some of the design standards or requirements that we might have,” she said. Fryer will come back to the Planning Commission in



Colin Murphey/The Astorian
Astoria could allow more housing options in single-family neighborhoods.

January with recommended changes and hopes to hold a hearing on the code amendments as soon as March before they head to the City Council.

Warrenton

Kevin Cronin, Warrenton’s community development director, created a list of recommended zoning and code changes stemming from a housing needs assessment completed in June. His recommendations included lower lot size requirements, higher densities and more diverse housing types such as mixed-use commercial-residential buildings, multiplexes, townhomes, cottage clusters, accessory dwelling units and transitional shelters. The Planning Commission last month recommended approval of most of Cronin’s recommendations, except for one requiring subdivisions of 20 or more homes to have structures — likely garages — ready for the future buildout of accessory dwelling units, and another banning certain siding materials staff sees as unsuitable for the region’s environment. The City Commission appeared poised earlier this week to make those recom-

mendations into city ordinance. But commissioners first wanted Cronin to make changes to increase parking and lot size in cottage clusters — a new type of housing being considered in Warrenton — and for wider street widths to account for the greater number of cars in the relatively lower-density city. “Just because of the way that rural living works, two cars is kind of almost, almost a necessity,” Mayor Henry Balensifer said. Cronin recommended a minimum lot size of 10,000 square feet for cottage clusters. Commissioner Mark Baldwin, a building contractor, suggested increasing the lot size to 15,000 square feet to make room for more parking, and making cottage clusters more feasible for developers. “I know we’re losing bang for buck, but we’re either going to lose bang for buck, or we’re going to turn into Portland,” he said. Cronin said he understands the fear of smaller streets clogged by parked cars, but doesn’t think wider streets necessarily solve anything. “The larger issue is just infrastructure costs in general,” he said. “And I think

that’s what we’re going to be talking to you about on” Tuesday as the city enters the budget process.

Spur 104

The Planning Commission last month also rejected Cronin’s attempt to craft an overlay zone for a mix of residential and commercial development on a wedge divided between 19 property owners between state Highway 104 and U.S. Highway 101. The City Commission recently approved a zone change there to allow a denser mix of commercial and residential development, along with public spaces, trails and improved streets. Planning commissioners argued that the proposal is too restrictive on property rights and doesn’t solve surrounding traffic issues that were the master plan’s impetus. Cronin said that master planning and collaboration between property owners is a cheaper fix to future traffic issues than costly infrastructure improvements. City commissioners largely agreed with Cronin’s call for more forward-thinking master planning. But Commissioner Pam Ackley wanted more information on the size of commercial spaces and related parking standards. The city has struggled with traffic issues at the intersection of Highway 101 and Ensign Lane, the hub of the North Coast Retail Center. Cronin has recommended caps of 350 housing units and 50,000 square feet of commercial space to limit traffic in the Spur 104 neighborhood. Balensifer said the City Commission will be ready to vote at its next regular meeting on the housing code amendments and the Spur 104 plan once it has a clearer picture on the parking standards and commercial lot sizes.

Homeless: Arrests also come at a cost

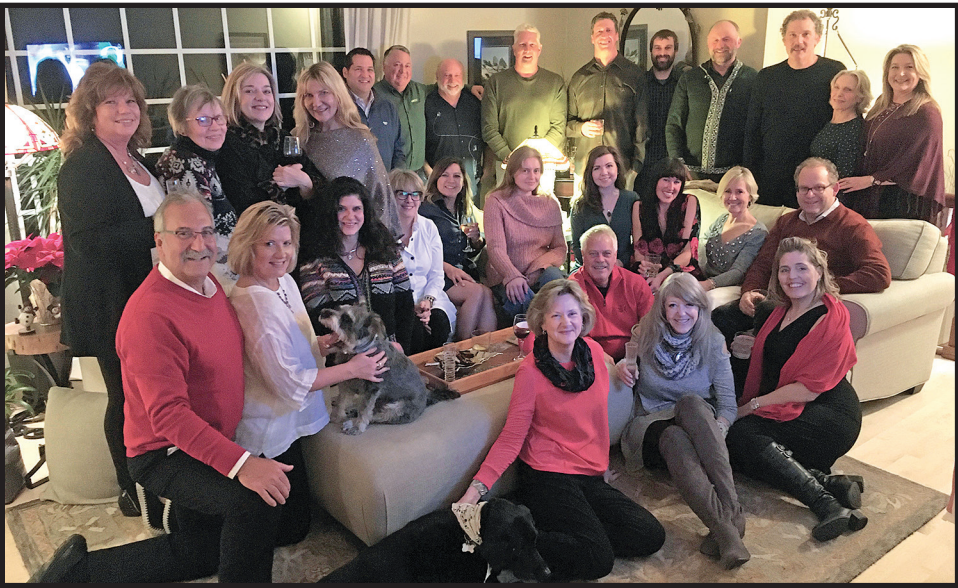
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County officials say there has been a jump in illegal activity on the property. Since heavy equipment cannot be used on the wetlands to clean up the mess, trash must be picked up by hand. The cleanup is expected to be costly. “I don’t know how to resolve it,” Warrenton Police Chief Mathew Workman said. “It’s a very difficult problem from physical logistics to manpower.” He said police are limited in what they can do. “If we’re citing a homeless person for trespass in a wilderness area where it’s not a person-on-person crime, it’s not something where they’ve hurt or threatened somebody, they’re not going to stay in jail,” he said. In the example of the man cited for reckless burning behind Goodwill, police

say they have had about 15 contacts with him since August for trespass and disorderly conduct. “It’s not like we are going around trying to find him,” Workman said. “It’s the total opposite — we are not. We are getting calls and he is there.” He said police have offered to find services for the man, but he refuses the help. Arrests also come at a cost. The city pays the Clatsop County Jail \$100 per day for booking, \$100 for each whole day of confinement and \$50 for a partial day of confinement for charges going through Municipal Court. The majority of arrests made by Warrenton police involve people who are booked and released or only spend a day in jail. “You add it up and it’s for a simple trespass that

they’re probably not going to go to court for. A lot of the people we cite don’t show up, and they get found guilty by default,” Workman said. “And they don’t have anything to pay the fine, so it’s an exercise in futility on a lot of this, but what do we do? “That property owner has a right to keep people off his property and to have people removed from his property.” He said “it’s kind of like water. When you’re pushing water out of one area, it goes to another area and we just keep chasing people. It’s the same people over and over that are in different areas of our community.” Warrenton Mayor Henry Balensifer said the city does not have the resources to deal with the problem. “And I don’t think the county has necessarily a coordinated idea of what’s going to work. I think

they’re still struggling to piece that together,” he said. “What I don’t like is creating new bureaucracies that do nothing but go to meetings,” he said. “And I think that is a big tendency of government is to create some liaison or person to be the point person to coordinate — coordinate what? There’s no money to do actually something like that.” Astoria formed a homelessness solutions task force two years ago to help address the issue. The task force is looking at the idea of a countywide homeless liaison. Balensifer believes the problem is bigger than the city and the county, and to tackle it will require state action. “People need to talk to their state legislators and say, ‘Hey, enough is enough. What are you going to do about this?’” the mayor said.



Gearhart Office
588 Pacific Way, Gearhart
503-738-8522
Cannon Beach Office
255 N Hemlock, Cannon Beach
503-436-1027
www.WindermereOregonCoast.com



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ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORTED IN OUR COMMUNITY

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| Assistance League of the Columbia Pacific | SMART Program’s at Gearhart Elementary |
| Astoria Rescue Mission | Warrenton Grade School |
| Autism Society of Oregon | AAUW Clatsop County Chapter |
| Camp Kiwanilong | South County Community Food Bank |
| Cannon Beach Food Pantry | Warrenton-Hammond Healthy Kids Inc. |
| Clatsop County CASA | |
| Food 4 Kids of Seaside | |
| Lunch Buddy Mentoring Program | |
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