

Port: Agency negotiated with managers

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The Port’s attorney, Eileen Eakins, responded in a letter that the Port has no objection to Astoria Forest Products terminating its leases effective April 30. She then laid out the costs of the company terminating leases early.

That includes more than \$14,600 a month due through April for the lease on Pier 1, along with the repair of damaged asphalt and fencing. The company would owe \$27,200 a month through April on Pier 3, along with an early termination fee of nearly \$109,000 and repair of any asphalt damage. The payment would be due Jan. 27.

The Port will help find new tenants to fill Astoria Forest Products’ offices on Pier 1 and lessen its termina-

tion costs, Eakins wrote, but the company is still liable for any unpaid rent.

On the accusation of elder abuse, Eakins argued that the Port has negotiated with Astoria Forest Products’ general managers, rather than Murphy.

The company’s “general managers — including, most recently, (Chad) Neidermeyer — never indicated a concern that Mr. Murphy was being exploited by the Port, and the Port reasonably assumed that these agents were negotiating in good faith on behalf of” Astoria Forest Products, Eakins wrote.

Astoria Forest Products assumed the leases of West-erlund Log Handlers in 2014 after helping its predecessor settle a lawsuit with Chinese customers.

But Astoria Forest Prod-ucts ran into its own troubles last year when the Chinese imposed tariffs on hemlock, the most common species exported from Astoria, along with Douglas fir and spruce, in retaliation for tariffs enacted by President Donald Trump.

The tariffs have made buy-ers hesitant and dried up tim-ber exports, the associated fees of which once accounted for between one-fifth and one-quarter of the Port’s oper-ational revenue.

Astoria Forest Products has not scheduled an out-going ship since October, when the African Raven left for China loaded with 6 mil-lion board feet. The company recently gave up two of its three offices in the Port’s Tag-gart Building on Pier 1 amid

the slowdown, sold a front-end log loader to Hampton Lumber and gave up many of its equipment leases.

The Port has cut staff costs, moved back to its old offices, rented out its new offices and signed a series of smaller leases to make up the losses from exports.

At a recent Port Commis-sion meeting, Will Isom, the Port’s executive director, said the agency is still at 93% of what it budgeted for revenue, while at only 89% of its bud-geted expenses. A record 33 cruise ships visiting this year will also help make up some pier revenues, he said.

“But longer term, we understand that financially the piers are the Port’s most val-uable asset,” Isom said. “So we’re going to have to find a way to utilize those piers.”

History: First archival evidence of the formation of La Pine Townsite Co.

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through the materials, Can-non-Miller said.

Previously, the museum was relying on old newspa-per clippings and oral his-tories to tell the story of La Pine, she said.

“Most of the history was developed just from the memories of the pioneer families,” she said. “This is the first archival evidence we have of the formation of the La Pine Townsite Co.”

The old documents show how Aya Sr., a Portland attorney, and a half-dozen other stakeholders planned to develop the town and sell off plats of land. They envi-sioned building railroads, warehouses, mills, facto-ries, churches, schools and hotels in the new town.

In a document dated March 27, 1911, the stake-holders agree to pave the streets and plant trees as a way to beautify the town and make it attractive for new residents.

“You have to make it pretty if you want peo-ple to move there,” Can-non-Miller said.

Among all the official documents are more than a hundred love letters writ-ten to Aya Sr. from his wife, Grace, who was living in Portland while he was start-ing the town of La Pine.

Grace would sometimes write to Aya Sr. four times a day and express how much she missed him.

“I thought I would write you a few lines before going to bed just to let you know I’m still think-ing of you,” Grace wrote in one letter. “You see you are continually on my mind Antony, dear. I missed you tonight like everything but reread your letter which helped a little bit.”

Rebekah Averette, reg-istrar for the museum, said the love letters help paint a more personal picture of Aya Sr. and what life was like for him and his wife.

“A lot of times you think of romances 100 years ago and they seem very stiff,” Averette said. “But these are just so mushy and adorable.”

Aya Sr. and Grace were married June 22, 1914, and lived in the new town cre-ated by the La Pine Town-site Co. More than 600 peo-ple lived in the town at the time.

The town did not grow as expected, in part because a railroad never came through.

In December 1933, the La Pine Townsite Co. dissolved. But the town remained an unincorpor-ated part of Deschutes County until it was incor-porated as a city in 2006.

Aya Sr. and his wife moved back to Portland in 1918, and he worked for his wife’s family company, Honeyman Hardware Co.

The Ayas raised three children, Alfred Jr., Roder-ick and Barbara.

Aya Jr., who served 25 years in the U.S. Army, spent his life in San Fran-cisco working for a phone company until he retired to Cannon Beach in 1984.

In his retirement, Aya Jr. spearheaded the design and installation of Cannon Beach’s famous “mooring” tsunami warning sirens.

Hawley, who consid-ers Aya Jr. an uncle, vis-ited him in Cannon Beach several times as a child and later as an adult. Hawley remembers helping with the installation of the tsu-nami warning system.

Through the years, Hawley learned all about Aya Jr.’s life, but never heard much about his con-nection to La Pine.

He was perplexed when he saw the note with the words, “La Pine,” and a combination to the safe.

“I had no idea what would be in that safe,” Hawley said. “It was all these beautifully kept records.”

AMCCO: ‘Regulations today are so complicated’

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Most of the outbuild-ings on the campus will be torn down, abandoned boats removed and shipways dis-connected from the Lewis and Clark River.

Contractors will demolish about half of the iconic, yawning double sheds once used as covered shipways to lay the hulls and build the superstruc-tures of warships. They will extend a dike along the Lewis and Clark through the middle of the shipways, removing old pilings and piers to improve tidal habitat.

More than 1,000 cubic yards of contaminated soil from burning areas will be removed, replaced and capped with gravel and sand. The property will be graded and drained into a bioswale to treat stormwater runoff.

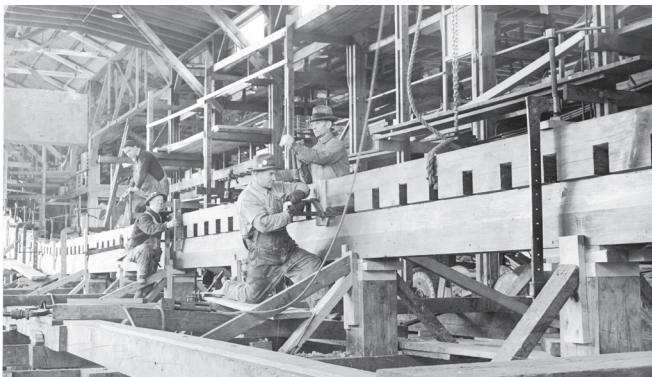
Fastabend, who has grown cynical over the expen-sive cleanup process and the slow demise of his com-pany, expects the major work to largely begin in June and wrap up by mid-October before long-term monitoring begins to assess the cleanup’s success.

“And then, it will be a wonderful world,” he said during a recent tour.

The history

Shipwright Joe Dyer started Astoria Marine in 1924 as Astoria Shipbuild-ing with a contract to build 12 gillnetters. The company became known for the man-ufacture and repair of wood-en-hulled fishing and ferry boats, tugboats, and yachts including the 120-foot Tour-ist III — the flagship of Capt. Fritz Elving’s Astoria-North Beach Ferry Co. — in 1931.

Astoria Marine received its first contract in 1941 to build four minesweepers for



Columbia River Maritime Museum

Workers at Astoria Marine Construction Co. lay the keel of a 136-foot minesweeper that served the U.S. and Soviet navies during World War II.

the Navy. The size of the yard doubled in a few months, including the large, covered shipways. Employment reached 400 people as the shipyard turned out dozens of warships.

Ships were built on an assembly line inside the sheds, the hull laid farther inland and the superstructure outfitted closer to the Lewis and Clark. Ships launched would go to an inlet of the nearby Jeffers Slough, nick-named the “pothole,” for the finishing touches before sea trials.

Astoria Marine was tasked with building several more minesweepers during the Korean War using specially designed nonmagnetic equip-ment. The company also read-ied reserve ships that had been mothballed after World War II at North Tongue Point. That’s where Fastabend’s father, Don Fastabend, came into the company.

“With over 400 guys, we were at our peak in terms of employment and produc-tion,” Don Fastabend said in a 2005 interview with historian David Kanally, who created the website historywithheart.com documenting the com-pany’s past.

Astoria Marine shrunk to

a fraction of its previous lar-gesse after the war, dwindling to about 15 workers, Don Fastabend said. By the early 1960s, Joe Dyer contemplated closing the yard.

Dyer instead let Don Fas-tabend and several partners take over. By 1975, only he was left. In 2003, Tim Fas-tabend stopped fishing in Alaska to come help his father, who died in 2013.

The future

Fastabend, who turns 66 in a couple of weeks, vacillates between whether to keep the shipyard going or shut down after the cleanup. The budget for the work has ballooned from \$1.5 million in 2015 to \$3.8 million. With around \$6 million spent on studies and testing, Fastabend estimates the company will be about \$10 million into the cleanup process, much of it paid for by old insurance policies from the 1940s and ‘50s put into an escrow account.

What doesn’t go into the cleanup goes to the U.S. Envi-ronmental Protection Agency. The company will also pay \$100,000 to the state for over-sight costs, while the state will wave \$40,000 worth of past and future oversight. The Columbia River Estu-

ary Study Taskforce is also receiving \$75,000 for resto-ration projects in Youngs Bay.

After the cleanup, Astoria Marine will be released from further liability.

“It’s like, really how much effort do I want to put into it” afterward, Fastabend said. “The regulations today are so complicated and expensive to deal with anything.”

A sad part is the younger shipwrights who had interest in keeping the business going, he said. Some of his former employees have gone to work for emerging companies like WCT Marine & Construction. More of the region’s shipping fleet has been going to the Port of Toledo, which con-structed a new haul-out facil-ity and boat lifts, or north to Westport, Washington.

Fastabend doesn’t know what he’d do if not for Asto-ria Marine, where he still runs around working on boats moored in the pothole. Aside from the shipyard, he coaches girls soccer for Astoria High School. He sold his fishing boat two years ago.

“Maybe that’s the answer,” he said of his future. “Go fishing.”

Clatsop Care: Open house set for Jan. 30

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Ideally, they hope students will stay with Clatsop Care, but Miller said even if people choose other options, Clat-sop Care will still offer flexi-ble employment on holidays, weekends or summer breaks.

“The clientele that we serve is both short term and long term,” Miller said. “So, as a new professional, you get to see more than just the broken wrist in the ER, or more than just the acci-dent trauma site on the road. You’re now seeing someone who has gone through all that and is stable, but they’re still very fragile. It’s a quick way

for a new person to see all the possibilities that the human body can go through.”

Though the work, he said, budding professionals can learn what part of caregiv-ing they are most drawn to while serving a need in the community.

“Because we’re 71 beds, and we’re a self-imposed cap of about 34 because of the staffing shortage, there’s a number of people that call us for services that we can’t accommodate,” Miller said. “We are full almost all the time. And so those local Clat-sop County citizens are going to Portland and beyond for care.”

Since they have to main-tain a staff-to-patient ratio, Miller said they have to turn away people every month. He said they have resorted to using a temporary staffing agency.

“Between the four units of the district, we do our best to try to support the citizens of the community to stay in their homes as long as pos-sible and to be as creative as we can for that goal,” Miller said.

An open house on the course is scheduled for 5:30 p.m. on Jan. 30 at Clat-sop Care Health and Reha-bilitation on 16th Street in Astoria.

Library: Award ‘is a huge step forward’

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David Oser, secretary and treasurer of the foundation, said the endowment has sig-naled the carbon seques-tration could be counted toward the grant match.

The foundation recently called on the city to help fundraise for and finance the restoration, arguing it

is unfair to lean on vol-unteers to do the work of professional fundraisers. Last month, city council-ors agreed to explore a bond measure in 2021. They also supported potentially con-tracting with someone to help raise money in advance of a bond.

“This significant federal award toward the transfor-

mation of our 52-year-old library into a highly func-tional space is a huge step forward,” Mayor Bruce Jones said in a news release. “The federal investment in our community validates our plan to provide Astori-ans a state-of-the-art library that will meet the com-munity’s needs for another 50 years.”

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