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ASTORIA COULD HELP FILL CHILD CARE VOID



Parents scramble for options

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Astorian

When the Astoria Community Child Center closed a decade ago because of financial troubles, city and educational leaders came together to open the Lil' Sprouts Academy in Capt. Robert Gray School.

The city Parks and Recreation Department's program — a success story serving about 60 children — is considering a possible expansion as early as next school year to help fill a void left by the imminent downsizing of Shooting Stars Child Development Center.

The city rents five rooms from the Astoria School District on the second floor of Gray School, where about 25 employees care for infants, toddlers and preschool-age children. The waitlist regularly runs between 20 and 30, with a higher need for younger children, said Brianna Bowker, the parks department's recreation manager.

Shooting Stars recently announced it would go from 50 to 15 children by next month.

"We have gotten inquiries," Bowker said of parents seeking options. "There were a handful of families that stayed on our waitlist since there was last time a fear of Shooting Stars" closing.

Port of Play

The city would like to lease the entire second floor of Gray School, Bowker said. But space is tight, with Lil' Sprouts, the federally funded Head Start preschool program and the school district's preschool, alternative high school and

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City of Astoria
The Astoria Parks and Recreation Department could expand its Lil' Sprouts day care program into the stage of Port of Play at Capt. Robert Gray School by next school year to help alleviate a child care shortage.



Colin Murphey/The Astorian

Children at Lil' Sprouts in Astoria play with their toys.



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Designated baskets hold coats, snacks and art in the hallway of Shooting Stars Child Development Center, which will close in Uniontown and downsize at the end of the month.

Pacific Seafood dorm approved

Neighbors are upset
over the project

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Astorian

The Astoria Planning Commission on Tuesday unanimously approved a one-year temporary permit for Pacific Seafood to operate a dorm for workers at Astoria Pointe over vehement opposition from neighbors.

Pacific Seafood hopes to house up to 80 employees, many from other countries on seven-month worker visas, between the spring and fall at the former drug treatment center in Uniontown. The treatment center — on a lot zoned for high-density residential but surrounded by single-family homes and narrow, hilly streets without sidewalks — has been vacant since 2018.

Neighbors packed several public hearings and argued the dormitory does not fit with the neighborhood and would cause safety, noise, traffic, parking and other issues.

Pacific Seafood argues the housing is necessary to help fully staff its Warrenton plant. The plant reopened in 2018 after being destroyed by fire but operates below full capacity. The company was also recently approved for a 70-room dormitory at a metal fabrication shop it owns in Hammond.

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RV park sued for negligence

Complaints at Sunset Lake

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

A former tenant at Sunset Lake Resort & RV Park south of Warrenton has filed a lawsuit against the owner alleging negligence over living conditions in a trailer.

Sandra Holloway, who moved into the RV park with her adult son in 2018, claims a property manager told her it was a "dry trailer" with no running water or an operable toilet. She said she was told to use a bucket and spigot next to her unit for water, and the park's shared bathroom for a toilet and shower.

She claims the water from the spigot was dirty and cloudy and smelled of rotten eggs. She also said the water in the shared bathroom was dirty and smelled.

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Warrenton moves forward on pedestrian routes

Links from downtown to
high school and shopping

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

WARRENTON — The city is moving ahead with two pedestrian routes to connect downtown to Warrenton High School and Fred Meyer.

The City Commission voted unanimously on Tuesday to award

a contract to OTAK Inc. for up to \$55,000 to create a conceptual plan for the routes and identify the cost.

The idea is to build one route along Harbor Drive from downtown to Fred Meyer. The other route would run along S. Main Avenue from downtown to the high school.

OTAK identified a high number of uncontrolled crossings, which can result in potential conflicts between pedestrians and vehicle traffic.

Mayor Henry Balensifer said it can be dangerous for people to walk, especially at night. He said the project would be a big win for residents.

Balensifer said pedestrian routes have been a priority for commissioners dating back to when his grandmother was the mayor.

"So, if we can find some way to get this going, this is a commission priority that has been going on for decades. This would be a real feather in the cap," he said.

Collin Stelzig, the city's public works director, said OTAK will conceptually design the safest, convenient and most efficient route for each corridor.

OTAK will take input from the community before bringing a plan and cost estimate to the city for review and approval.



Warrenton wants to make it safer for people to walk from downtown to Fred Meyer.



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