

IN BRIEF

Beach access on the North Coast remains closed this weekend.

Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian



Beach access closed to vehicles on weekends over virus

Clatsop County will close vehicle access to North County beaches for the remaining weekends in April.

Gates at the entrances of Sunset Beach and Del Rey Beach will be closed beginning Friday evening and will reopen Monday morning.

The beach at Seaside is closed to all and the beach access road in Gearhart is closed. State parks are also closed.

Cities in the county encourage people to recreate in their own communities. Officials say large numbers of visitors crowding beaches will result in more restrictions.

Cannon Beach extends protective measures over virus

The Cannon Beach City Council has extended its protective measures in response to the coronavirus until at least May 5.

On March 22, the city closed to visitors and restricted hotels from operating with the exception of people on long-term stays and essential workers.

The City Council plans to keep the protective measures in effect as long as the city's state of emergency is in effect, but will continue to reevaluate every two weeks.

Free breakfast for emergency responders

The Seaside Civic and Convention Center and Oregon Fine Foods have partnered to provide complimentary breakfast for people in need and emergency responders in Clatsop County.

People can drive-thru at the northeast loading zone of the convention center from 6:30 to 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday for pancakes and sausages while supplies last.

"Due to the overwhelming success of our first pancake feed, we decided to provide a second round to anyone in Clatsop County who is a first responder or has felt the pinch of this pandemic from an economic standpoint," said Russ Vandenberg, general manager of the convention center.

— The Astorian

DEATHS

Feb. 21, 2020

GRAYUM, Harley W. Jr., 74, of Salem, formerly of Astoria, died in Salem. Crown Memorial Center of Salem was in charge of the arrangements.

BIRTH

March 28, 2020

RICHMOND, Christina and Ryan, of Warrenton, a boy, Mark Robert Richmond, born at Columbia Memorial Hospital in Astoria. Grandparents are Roxann Pearson and Robert and Debra Richmond, of Ocean Park, Washington, and Diane and Ben Nofsinger, of Longview, Washington.

ON THE RECORD

Theft

Hannah Havranek, 29, was arrested Thursday on Marlin Avenue in Warrenton for theft in the second degree and criminal trespass in the first degree.

Vehicle charge

Lonie Charles Davis Jr., 41, was arrested Wednesday on W. Marine Drive near Astoria High School for unauthorized use of a motor vehicle, possession of heroin and possession of methamphetamine.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

MONDAY

Knappa School District Board, 5:30 p.m., (video meeting).
Astoria City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 1095 Duane St.

TUESDAY

Port of Astoria Commission, 4 p.m., workshop, 10 Pier 1, Suite 209, (teleconference).
Astoria Historic Landmarks Commission, 5:15 p.m., City Hall, 1095 Duane St.
Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District Board of Directors, 5:15 p.m., regular meeting, 6 p.m., budget meeting, Bob Chisholm Community Center, 1225 Avenue A, Seaside.
Seaside School District Board of Directors, 6 p.m., budget committee meeting immediately followed by regular meeting, 1801 S. Franklin.

South County gets emergency radio boost

Seaside approves \$135,000 purchase

By R.J. MARX
The Astorian

Seaside made a big advance to improving radio communications for first responders. The City Council approved \$135,000 for the purchase and implementation of a new simulcast radio system on Monday.

A double layer of coverage in a number of places should "greatly increase our reception and transmission," the city's police communications manager, Mitch Brown, said during the livestream meeting.

Funds will be used to replace the current radio system and upgrade to the new system in about three to four months.

Additional repeaters, related equipment and installation are priced above \$123,000. The additional \$12,000 requested will go to a new pole at an emergency operations center above the site of the new middle and high school campus in the Southeast Hills.

Current communications consist of a single site on Tillamook Head, Brown said. That site will remain

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Seaside Mayor Jay Barber

operational with additional facilities at the new school near the water tower and at Humbug Creek along U.S. Highway 26. This would help Hamlet, Cannon Beach, Gearhart and Seaside radio communications for both police and fire.

Funding for the new technology will come from the public safety budget, City Manager Mark Winstanley said.

Current portable reception for Cannon Beach is "pretty poor," Brown said.

At Humbug Creek, the city will pay a rental fee to the Oregon Department of Transportation, similar to the agreement at Tillamook Head, Seaside Fire Chief Joey Daniels said. "County sheriff's office and others are out there. We'll go on the same pole they are. We have pretty weak to no reception, especially at Milepost 3 all the way to the (Highway) 53 junction or farther."

The Cannon Beach Rural

Fire Protection District, which serves Cannon Beach to Falcon Cove, has historically struggled with reception because of the mountainous terrain between radio repeaters. Certain areas are known to be dead zones.

At least six pagers for Cannon Beach firefighters, including the fire chief's pager, did not activate for a three-alarm fire in Seaside in February because of poor reception.

The Seaside dispatch center, which handles emergency calls for agencies in Seaside, Cannon Beach, Gearhart and Hamlet, texts emergency responders as a backup when pagers don't activate.

Marc Reckmann, Cannon Beach Fire Chief, has called for improvements, including consolidating services and technology.

Reckmann watched the City Council meeting remotely and said the upgrades will make a sub-

stantial impact on communications in South County.

But Reckmann continues to press for a consolidated response center to address staffing shortages and delays between north and South County dispatchers. "The county has done the separate studies since 1997, all saying the same thing: Consolidate."

The city may ask other jurisdictions for funding, through conversations with Cannon Beach Fire and other agencies, Winstanley said.

"In the future, yes, we may see that those agencies financially help, but right now we're prepared to move forward with it with the budgets we have so that we can get this done," Winstanley said. "This has been a problem for quite a while down in the South County. Radio traffic in some of those locations has been very spotty, and we do a lot of mutual aid down in those areas. From a safety standpoint making this improvement is very important and we're ready to go."

"This is really a safety issue," Mayor Jay Barber said. "We don't want our police, fire, EMTs out of contact in an emergency situation."

Coast Community Radio awarded major grant

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

Coast Community Radio, a nonprofit based in Astoria, has received a \$120,000 grant to upgrade broadcast equipment.

The nonprofit operates three local stations, KMUN, KTCB and KCPB, which broadcast throughout the North Coast and southwest Washington state.

The grant, awarded by the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust, matches funds raised by individuals and other charitable foundations since 2018.

Coast Community Radio said the grant is the cornerstone for a major equip-



ment and facilities overhaul dubbed "Radio For Good."

The biggest upgrades were made last year when the station purchased and installed a new transmitter on Megler Mountain in Washington.

Susan Peterson, Coast Community Radio's development director, said the financial support "helps

us fulfill our mission. It makes the whole community better."

Peterson said the grant from M.J. Murdock is the largest grant the nonprofit has received since she began seven years ago.

"Money like that infused into a community like ours — small, rural, a little apart from the the big city for sure — it's just so important," she said. "It breathes so much vitality and perseverance into our community."

Graham Nystrom, the station manager, said professional broadcast equipment is not cheap and that the grant was much needed.

"Melvin 'Jack' Murdock was a radio guy," Nystrom

said in a statement. "He owned a radio and appliance sales and service shop out of high school and went on to start Tektronix, a company that manufactures test equipment used widely in audio and broadcast fields, as well as many others."

"Lorin Dunlop, our program director at the trust, assured me that Jack and the trust have always funded radio, and that if he were around today, he would love our station. I offer my deepest gratitude to Jack Murdock, the trust, our community and the other foundations who have helped us raise the funds for our much needed 'radio redo'."

Newspapers struggle financially during pandemic

By GEOFF NORCROSS and DONALD ORR

Oregon Public Broadcasting

During the coronavirus outbreak, the hunger for news and up-to-date information has never been stronger.

But in the midst of a once-in-a-lifetime event, local newspapers are struggling in an already fragile industry.

On Wednesday, the owners of The Oregonian — the largest paper in the state — announced they were cutting employee pay by as much as 20% from May through December. They're also requiring employees to take additional unpaid furloughs of one or two weeks, depending on department.

Heidi Wright is the publisher of the Bend Bulletin and the chief operating officer with EO Media Group, which publishes newspapers in Oregon and Washington state, including The Astorian. The company laid off 47 employees across

its newsrooms in the last month.

In the face of those hard choices, Wright told Oregon Public Broadcasting's "Morning Edition" that she's confident more job cuts aren't on the horizon for her organization.

"I don't see more layoffs coming. I think we took action fairly quickly, and we anticipate that we'll be able to keep our current staffing level through this crisis," she said. "And we'll come out the other end hopefully a stronger, sustainable company."

Despite mass layoffs, EO Media newsrooms such as the East Oregonian and the Hermiston Herald are striving to still meet the demand for accurate and timely information.

"We've never been busier. Our newsrooms might be ghost towns, but we've got a lot of reporters out, and we're producing a lot of content, which I think is getting consumed voraciously in our communities," Wright

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Heidi Wright | chief operating officer with EO Media Group

said.

"As of last night, (we had) 930 bylined coronavirus stories. That's just on this topic, let alone the other news we need to continue to report on."

EO Media Group is getting help from the federal government through a payroll protection loan, which covers payroll for its remaining employees. That includes everyone who works for the company, not just reporters.

However, local journalism was struggling to stay afloat even before the coronavirus hit, as overall advertising and subscription revenues have been on the decline. Wright said the business model needs to adapt when hard times come.

"Google and Facebook

have done a really good job of monetizing the content that all of us produce ... so we've got to figure out how to find new revenue streams, and we're doing that," Wright said.

In the meantime, Wright said Gov. Kate Brown and the state government could potentially step up to save local newspapers in a time of crisis.

"It would be very helpful if the governor's office would utilize the newspapers around the state and the other media organizations around the state that produce journalism — if they could utilize us with their 'Stay Home, Save Lives' campaign," Wright said.

"It'd be nice to see some of that money stay in Oregon and save some journalism lives."

the Astorian

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