

IN BRIEF

Pacific County announces first coronavirus death

SOUTH BEND, Wash. — Pacific County reported its first coronavirus death Thursday afternoon, attributed to the individual who was the first county resident to test positive for the virus.

The individual tested positive for COVID-19 while out of state and was receiving medical treatment out of state. No other details were provided by the Pacific County Department of Health & Human Services and the Pacific County Emergency Operations Center.

“Our deepest sympathies go out to the family and friends of this individual during this time of loss. Our thoughts and prayers are with them,” Dr. Steven Krager, the county’s health officer, said in a statement.

Lori Craig Ashley, the county’s lead public health nurse for this case, also offered her “heartfelt condolences.”

The individual’s positive diagnosis and subsequent death are being attributed to Pacific County’s statistics because the county was their place of residence.

When the county reported the initial positive case on April 10, officials announced the resident hadn’t been in the county for more than a month and the patient didn’t catch the virus locally or pass it on to anyone inside the county.

Pacific County beach approaches still closed

Beach approaches in Pacific County will not reopen on Monday.

At a meeting of the Pacific County Emergency Management Agency on Wednesday, mayors and county commissioners pushed the discussion of reopening local beach approaches and hospitality lodging to nearer to May 18.

The move mirrors the decision by Ocean Shores to extend its beach approach closure to that date.

Because the county wants to be collaborative with other coastal communities on when to reopen, Pacific County Board of Commissioners Chairman Frank Wolfe said the county will revisit the discussion about a week ahead of May 18.

“I would go along with May 18, and that is in quotes because it’s kind of a soft squishy thing,” Wolfe said.

— *Chinook Observer*

Unemployment claims pass 3,200 in county

More than 3,200 people in Clatsop County have filed unemployment claims over the last six weeks of the coronavirus pandemic.

Nearly half the claims have come from employees laid off from lodgings, restaurants and bars, closed to short-term stays and in-house dining to stem the spread of the virus. Nearly 13% have come from retail workers, 10% from health care and social services scaled back to preserve capacity and 5% from construction workers.

More than 30 million Americans have applied for unemployment during the outbreak, including more than 362,000 Oregonians.

But the numbers are likely much higher. A recent study by the Economic Policy Institute found that beyond those who filed successful claims, roughly half more were unsuccessful or did not try because of the formidable barriers in the country’s unemployment systems.

Mail-in voting is free

Oregon is providing postage-page envelopes for mail-in ballots, making it free to mail May 19 election ballots.

Ballots must be received by local elections offices by 8 p.m. on Election Day.

People can drop off ballots at the 24-hour drive-up drop box in Astoria outside of 820 Exchange St., or in Seaside outside of City Hall at 989 Broadway St.

— *The Astorian*

ON THE RECORD

Menacing

• Brett Brunick, 41, of Astoria, was arrested Wednesday on state Highway 202 in Astoria for menacing, possession of weapon with intent to use, harassment and reck-

less endangerment.

Criminal mischief

• Christopher Clifford Dahl, 61, was arrested Wednesday at the Garden of Surging Waves in Astoria for criminal mischief in the third degree.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

MONDAY

Astoria City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 1095 Duane St.

TUESDAY

Clatsop County Board of Commissioners, noon, work session (electronic meeting).

Port of Astoria Commission, 4 p.m., (electronic meeting).

Clatsop Care Health District Board, 5 p.m., (electronic meeting).

Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District, 5:15 p.m., workshop, (electronic meeting).

Seaside Library Board, 5:30 p.m., (electronic meeting).

Miles Crossing Sanitary Sewer District Board, 6 p.m., 34583 U.S. Highway 101 Business.



Homeowners appeal Cannon Beach dune policies

Colin Murphey/The Astorian

Sand dunes in Cannon Beach.

Challenges filed with the state

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ

The Astorian

CANNON BEACH —

Two homeowners associations will send appeals to the state over Cannon Beach’s new, more restrictive dune management policies.

The Breakers Point and Chapman Point homeowners associations, which represent communities on the north end of the city, each separately filed an intent to appeal with the Land Use Board of Appeals on Monday. They say the new policies eliminate their ability to restore the dunes.

The foredune management plan approved by the City Council in April removed “grading for views.” The plan also lim-

ited other grading and maintenance measures, like mowing and trimming, in part to account for expected sea level rise and other climate change shifts. Some movement of sand will continue to be allowed.

Cannon Beach launched an update of the management plan in 2017, prompted in part by requests from residents to remove large amounts of sand that were inundating property and blocking ocean views.

A lengthy, polarizing public process followed as residents sparred over what it meant to manage the dunes and what level of management was acceptable.

Caleb Whitmore, the board chairman of the Breakers Point Homeowners Association, said the new policies leave little room for the kind of maintenance needed to “reset” dunes that have grown large in part

because of the presence of invasive European dune grass likely introduced to stabilize them in the 1950s and ’60s.

“We had really hoped that after the very long process the city went through over the prior years, they would come up with something that met the voiced needs of members all across the community,” Whitmore said.

However, others have argued that the kind of dune grading that has occurred in the past to preserve ocean views damages beach ecosystems and benefits only a small portion of residents.

“Each grading has the feel and aesthetic of a clearcut,” Michael Manzulli, a Tolovana Park resident, wrote in public testimony to the city about dune grading work in one area of Cannon Beach.

“It’s not destroying the dunes, it’s trying to manage a man-made problem,”

Whitmore counters.

A report by state geologists contracted by Cannon Beach concluded that since 1939 the city has seen a substantial amount of sand accumulate on beaches and dunes north of Haystack Rock even while there has been a loss of sand farther south. Invasive European beach grass at Chapman Point helped build up large dunes to the north.

“We have always been in favor of overall dune stewardship, which we have practiced for many years with annual Scotch broom removal, for example,” David Snodgrass, the president of the Chapman Point Homeowners Association, said in a statement.

“We remain hopeful that an approach to managing the dunes in a biodiverse, ecologically healthy way, making the dunes better for everyone, may yet be found.”

VFW wants former Hammond library for a hall

By EDWARD STRATTON

The Astorian

WARRENTON — The Fort Stevens post of the Veterans of Foreign Wars hopes to make the former library building in Hammond its new hall.

The City Commission, while warming to the VFW’s proposal and wanting to get out from under the ramshackle building, is leaning toward a public forum to gather people’s opinions.

“While I totally want to give this to the VFW and I would be tickled to death as a community member if the VFW got it, I still think that’s a very sensitive piece of real estate in our city,” Mayor Henry Balensifer said. “I think the onus is on ... the VFW, actually, to propose what they want to do with it, and sell that to the community.”

The library building, a former barracks from Fort Stevens sitting along Pacific Drive, played host to Hammond’s town hall before the city was incorporated into Warrenton. Warrenton moved the library in 2017 to the former Serendipity Caffe building on Main Avenue, increasing its patronage.

The Hammond property still has a playground the City Commission wants to keep open, and plays host to a summer feeding site for children.

Bert Little, the post quartermaster for the Fort Stevens VFW, said the group



The Astorian

The Fort Stevens post of the Veterans of Foreign Wars wants to make the former library building in Hammond its new hall.

has no home base. The post has held meetings at churches and, most recently, the Masonic Gateway Lodge No. 175.

“It would be perfect for us,” he said of the Hammond building.

The group has more than 180 members, but about 12 regularly show up to monthly meetings every third Thursday, he said. The Hammond building can hold 40. The group would lend the space to the Cub Scouts on Mondays and rent it out for other events.

“It’s just like the community center,” he said. “You can rent it out so far in advance.”

The historic building has badly deteriorated. Former City Manager Kurt Fritsch in 2016 said the building was in critical condition and dangerous to occupants.

City Commissioner Mark Baldwin, a building contractor, said the building likely has lead paint, asbestos and other issues. “This kind of comes back to the same thing we’ve dealt with with (many) of our other buildings,” he said. “We have little to no funds to do building maintenance.”

The VFW hopes to have staff at Camp Rilea work on the building as part of a base project and apply for more grants to fund the restoration. But the group needs to own the building first.

City staff recently received a \$90,000 appraisal on the property and building. But Little said the VFW post rarely has more than \$5,000 in the bank to last the group a year, with most of its revenue going back into support programs.

The appraisal of less than \$100,000 means the decision to sell would not have to go before voters. City commissioners appeared mostly favorable toward selling or even giving the VFW the building, and possibly the land, with a reversionary clause guaranteeing it stays available to the public.

Baldwin didn’t want to scare the VFW away with the \$90,000 price tag, but said the city also can’t appear to be playing favorites.

“I’d love to see the VFW there,” he said. “We’re one of the towns that I go to that there’s not a VFW hall. And I think it’s a part of Americana. We need one.”

City Commissioner Pam Ackley, a real estate agent, agreed with Baldwin about not playing favorites. She said the VFW would likely need to own the land and the building to help with grants.

Commissioner Rick Newton questioned the \$90,000 appraisal and said he’d just like to be out from under the issues with the building.

Balensifer called on staff to organize a public meeting to hear from the VFW and other interested parties.

“I think the VFW will win, but I’m not saying it will,” he said. “Maybe there’s some grand other use we didn’t know about, we didn’t hear about, and the community would have that say.”

the Astorian

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