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CORONAVIRUS

Senators push for coastal support

Wyden, Merkley try to shape relief bill

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Astorian

Oregon's two U.S. senators are pushing for direct payments to small businesses and mass purchases of seafood to better help coastal communities in the next federal coronavirus relief bill. U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden and U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley joined coastal legislators for a virtual town hall Friday before returning Monday to the Capitol, where they face a slate of coronavirus-related priorities. Wyden, the ranking member on the Senate Finance Committee, said he is proposing payments worth up to 30% of a company's gross revenue the previous

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Educator retiring after 35 years

The principal at Hilda Lahti

By GARY HENLEY
The Astorian

"I'm a Minnesota girl," says Leila Collier, the principal at Knappa's Hilda Lahti Elementary School.

So — as a Minnesotan — the longtime teacher and administrator likes to keep things short and simple when talking about her upcoming retirement.

"So ... you're going to retire, then?"

"Ya ... it was kind of time, then."

Not in those exact words, but Collier — after 35 years in the local education system — seems to be taking her retirement in stride.

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Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Bornstein Seafoods in Astoria has closed after several workers tested positive for the coronavirus.

Bornstein Seafoods faced safety complaint before coronavirus outbreak

At least 13 workers test positive for virus

By EDWARD STRATTON
and NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

Bornstein Seafoods faced a complaint with the state Occupational Safety and Health Administration over coronavirus precautions before at least 13 workers at an Astoria plant tested positive for the virus.

The outbreak at the seafood processor tripled the number of Clatsop County cases after three weeks where no new cases had emerged.

The Lower Columbia Hispanic Council, responding to concerns from workers about how Bornstein Seafoods was protecting them against the virus, filed a complaint on April 18 citing a lack of social distancing and personal protective equipment.

An OSHA spokesperson confirmed a complaint is open, but declined to comment on whether OSHA has inspected the plant.

Bornstein Seafoods, which employs more than 150 people between two plants at the Port of Astoria, alerted the county Friday after a worker in his 40s at the main plant at the foot of Pier 1

'PLEASE EVERYONE, LET THIS SERVE AS A REMINDER THAT WE SIMPLY DON'T KNOW WHERE THE VIRUS IS AND WHO HAS IT, INCLUDING OURSELVES — CONTINUE TO DO EVERYTHING YOU CAN TO BREAK THE CYCLE OF TRANSMISSION BY WASHING, WEARING A MASK WHEN AROUND OTHERS, AND STAYING HOME IF AND WHEN YOU CAN.'

Mayor Bruce Jones

tested positive for the coronavirus. The company shut the plant down for deep cleaning. A second positive

case — a woman in her 50s — was reported on Sunday.

Over the weekend, staff from the Clatsop County Public Health Department tested 35 workers with coronavirus symptoms, resulting in 13 positive cases as of Monday morning, with five more results pending.

The 11 positive cases reported on Monday include four women — one in her 30s and three in their 40s — and seven men — two in their 30s, four in their 50s and one in his 60s. More workers are expected to be tested Tuesday.

Bornstein Seafoods has closed both plants until further notice and advised workers to shelter at home.

Andrew Bornstein, the co-owner and vice president of the seafood processor, contested the workers' claims of lax safety precautions and said his company has been training staff on guidelines from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for more than a month.

After the complaint, Bornstein said, he invited staff from the county Public Health Department to tour the plant and recommend best practices to increase distancing, and to help his company acquire hard-to-find protective equipment.

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Voters asked to approve two tax levies on May ballot

Money for county fair, Cannon Beach fire

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

Voters will be asked to support two tax levies on the May 19 ballot to increase funding for the Clatsop County Fairgrounds and the Cannon Beach Rural Fire Protection District.

The coronavirus pandemic has had a devastating impact on the local economy and unemployment, making it a difficult time to ask voters for more money. But supporters of

the levies say the crisis has shown why additional funding is crucial.

The Clatsop County Fairgrounds has already taken a financial hit with the cancellation of the Crab, Seafood & Wine Festival and the Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival — two of the fairground's biggest events of the year.

"I think it sort of highlights that we've tried really hard over the last several years to be real frugal and to balance our budget and keep a contingency, and bring in new events ... But boy, just something like this sure changes the equation pretty quickly," said Mike Autio, the chairman of the Fair Board.

Some voters will get new ballots after county mix-up

Mistake involves District 2

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

New ballots for the May 19 election will be mailed to 440 voters after a mix-up by Clatsop County.

The county clerk's office learned Friday that voters in precinct 22 — North Clatsop — received ballots that did not include the District 2 race for the county Board of Commissioners.

Commissioner Sarah Nebeker is running for reelection against John Toyooka, the manager of Lum's Auto Center, in a district that covers Gearhart, Clatsop Plains and portions of Seaside and Warrenton.

In a statement Saturday afternoon, the county said any ballots already submitted by these voters will not be counted.

The county explained that the voters were inadvertently moved out of District 2 during the process of removing them from a water district they do not reside in.

The mix-up involves a significant number of voters in District 2. Four years ago, when Nebeker won reelection, about 1,900 voters cast ballots for candidates.

Nebeker called the county's mistake "unfortunate." She declined to comment further until she learns more from county officials.

Toyooka referred to an adage from his U.S. Marine Corps days: "We don't worry about fixing the blame, we just fix the problem."

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