

The water district in Falcon Cove will extend a moratorium.

Colin Murphey/The Astorian



Falcon Cove: Board's actions draw criticism

Continued from Page A1

The water district declared an emergency in December 2018 after reporting that water production had been at record low levels for the past several years during late summer months. The board attributed the water shortage to increased use at vacation rentals.

Property owners who want to build in Cove Beach and Falcon Cove, an unincorporated area on the border of Clatsop and Tillamook counties, have been limited in their ability to obtain building permits because of the moratorium.

Separate investigations

The board's actions have drawn criticism about transparency and possible ulterior motives to limit development. Some property owners have conducted their own investigations, which have contradicted the board's findings.

Guido Paparoni, a geologist, and his wife, Margaret Rozendaal, a climate scientist, own a lot in Cove Beach and spent months analyzing data obtained through public records requests. They came to the conclusion that there is no drought or water shortage in the late summer months. David Livermore, a

hydrogeologist and longtime homeowner in Cove Beach, came to the same conclusions. They shared their findings with the water district and Clatsop County last year.

Dice walked back claims of a water shortage in December after he said the water district discovered an obstruction in its well that led to false data. He said he felt confident another extension of the moratorium would not be needed.

But Dice told property owners Saturday that the water district is waiting on a water rights permit from the state for the well, which is why the board is extending the moratorium for another six months.

"As soon as we have final approval, then as the board has discussed, we will take the risk, sort to speak, and lift the moratorium even before we have finished the construction of the integration with well No. 1," Dice said. "That's our intent."

But Paparoni and others told the board in May that they emailed the Oregon Water Resources Department and found that no permit application process is needed because the water district qualifies for exempt use.

Clatsop County Commissioner Lianne Thompson, who represents most of South

County and lives in Cove Beach, told the water district board during a public hearing Saturday that the purpose of the board is to deliver water.

"To the extent that it strays beyond that — speaking hypothetically, of course — into areas such as constraining growth, that is beyond the scope of the legal authority of the water board," she said.

"Working with my experience and listening to the myriad of phone calls and emails — please, I have so many during the past months and years — I would say that this district is at risk for lawsuits because people see illegal taking of their property rights. I also have heard the risk of ethics complaints with the Oregon Ethics Commission, but most of all I have seen exacerbating conflict between neighbors. To the extent that we are living together here as neighbors, I beg you, I plead with you, look for ways to listen to others."

'Appropriate data'

Residents and property owners also spoke out against the board's plan to install a second well. The water district has identified a subdivision called Cove Creek as a location for a second well.

Jim Caldwell, who lives in

Cove Creek, asked the board to consider delaying spending money on studies for a second well.

"From what I know of the other folks here, I think there's pretty much consensus that we're not interested in pushing forward with that until we have good evidence and the water is actually needed," he said.

"I think the main question that arises for many of us here and in Cove Creek is that, you know, this report that Guido Paparoni and Margaret Rozendaal have submitted in the past to the board has not really, as far as we can tell, been addressed," he said.

Krista Shipsey, who also lives in Cove Creek, told the board she wants to understand the discrepancies between Paparoni and Rozendaal's findings and the water district's findings, especially since the moratorium is driving the district's budget.

"And what I'm asking for is an opportunity to really ask questions regarding kind of both datasets, because I think in order to justify the moratorium and everything that goes toward that in terms of the budget, there needs to be appropriate data and there needs to be the ability to question that," she said.

Williams: New director will face challenge of steering the department out of pandemic havoc

Continued from Page A1

for the welfare of subordinate employees as well to safeguard the interests of the city and the community."

Williams, who has been on leave since allegations about his behavior surfaced in November, could not be reached for comment.

The city said the woman who voiced concerns about his behavior voluntarily resigned. She declined to comment.

In the report, Akin Blitz, a Portland labor attorney who conducted the investigation for Astoria, concluded that both the woman and Williams engaged in job-related misconduct. The report alleges the woman made a false claim for about \$3,000 in overtime.

The woman told the city in November that Williams' behavior toward her was inappropriate and upsetting. The report found, however, that the woman did not tell Williams that his conduct was unwelcome.

"(She) encouraged and was a willing participant in a relationship of mutuality," the report determined.

But, the report maintained, "None of the circumstances diminish Williams' ultimate and primary responsibility for all (that) occurred."

The woman has said that she did not ask for attention from Williams. She said Williams encouraged her to apply for a larger role within the parks department and seemed to support her. But she said his behavior toward her turned inappropriate and he did things to paint her in a bad light. She also said she worried about losing her job.

Williams was hired as parks director in January 2019.

Within a few months, his behavior drew the attention of human resources.

According to documents prepared as part of the city's investigation, Williams' conduct with another woman who worked at the parks department exceeded the bounds of workplace professionalism and led to Williams taking harassment training online. The city also brought in an organizational expert to help with the work relationship between Williams and the employee.

Williams, who has worked for several parks departments and came to Astoria from a post in Roswell, New Mexico, was hired to replace Angela Cosby as parks director. Cosby left the city in 2018 for a parks job in Colorado.

The parks department had shifted to a new budgetary model that reflects the true costs of running programs and facilities like the Astoria Aquatic Center, maintaining parks and other operations. City Manager Brett Estes had hoped Williams would help streamline internal processes and procedures as the department rebuilt.

Estes said the city conducts vigorous background checks before hiring department directors. He said he remains confident in the vetting process as the city seeks to hire a new parks director.

Jonah Dart-McLean had been serving as acting parks director while Williams was on leave. He will serve as interim parks director.

"We just need to continue our due diligence to gather as much information as we can during the recruitment process," Estes said.

The new director will face the challenge of steering the parks department out of the havoc created by the coronavirus pandemic.

"Now, we're in a whole new world," Estes said.

Port: Hopes to complete infrastructure projects

Continued from Page A1

The Port isn't planning to lay off or furlough any employees, Isom said, but has frozen pay increases for all staff in the coming year and projects to save \$75,000 from fewer security officers contracted to watch over ships.

The Port hopes to complete several major infrastructure projects on the central waterfront, from replacing pilings and dredging a portion of the West Mooring Basin to repairing portions of Pier 2 and parts of the rotting East Mooring Basin causeway to help fishermen once again reach their boats from land.

The Port is also hoping to study an expansion of

the boatyard on Pier 3 as it moves away from major log export operations back toward a boatworking center envisioned in earlier strategic plans.

"The level of outside funding the Port is able to secure will determine the time frame in which the Port can complete the many deferred maintenance projects that exist," Isom said.

Isom asked the Port Commission to approve a transfer of \$532,000 from the Port's special revenue fund, a deposit of timber taxes, to help cover the cost of such projects. The Port recently contracted with Shane Jensen, the agency's former property and contracts director, to pursue more grants, a source of income where the agency

often lags behind its peers.

Idling cruise ships

The Port has found a potential saving grace in cruise ships needing docks to idle at as the industry weathers a global shutdown. Local leaders generally support the idea, and the Port recently secured berthing reservations for two ships from Norwegian Cruise Line that Isom estimated could have made the agency up to \$15,000 a day.

But an outbreak of the virus at Bornstein Seafoods made Clatsop County staff and local leaders uneasy about people seeing cruise ships in town and inundating them with calls.

Members of the Port's budget committee shared their frustration over a

decision they argued was shortsighted and more about public perception than safety.

"That was a piss-poor decision at the county level," said Walt Postlewait, chairman of the budget committee and an executive vice president with Craft3. "That was 'covering my own ass because I don't want to deal with it.'"

Isom has shared his concerns that cruise companies might be reluctant to work with the Port in the future because of the last-minute cancellation.

The Port's budget committee will likely approve the proposed budget at its next meeting Wednesday, sending the document to the Port Commission for final approval.

Stoddard: 'I'm self-taught'

Continued from Page A1

"But a really cool thing, through it all, is the amazing undying support of my local community — of my immediate circle of friends that are so willing to be excited and happy and laugh and join in on it with me," she said.

"Even though through all of quarantine we're not able to physically be together, through social media, they're still able to cheer me on and share my video."

Stoddard said she started baking five years ago and it became her passion. She said her business took off after she was invited to have a booth at a farmers market at Columbia Memorial Hospital in Astoria. She made about 20 dozen cup-

cakes and they sold out in about 20 minutes.

"I'm self-taught. I never went to culinary school or anything like that," she said. "And it took me awhile to figure it out. You can take one recipe and do it a million different ways because every little flick of your wrist changes it."

Stoddard said some people may get frustrated if there are problems and give up. She said there is always a simple solution and that the information should be more accessible to people.

"I feel so fulfilled when I can answer somebody else's question. And I guess that's kind of like my teacher brain popping in and applying my teaching into my passion, which is baking," she said.

Are you open for business, or planning to reopen?



Reach your customers with the help of EO Media Group's

Community Marketing Grant Program

eomediagroup.com/marketing-grant

