

Housing: Funded mostly by federal tax credits

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Chelsea Gardens envisioning a mix of denser housing, commercial spaces and open areas for residents.

Trillium House will likely become the neighborhood’s first new multifamily development.

“I think it’s exciting, because sometimes it just takes something to get things kick-started,” Mayor Henry Balensifer said. “... And the concept plan shows a garden, it shows a park, a little playground area. It’s everything basically the city has been trying to strive for.”

Ross Cornelius, a client services manager for Walsh Construction, helped assemble the funding package for Trillium House.

“I wish there was a simpler way for affordable housing to get developed,” he said. “But typically it’s assembling a bunch of different sources and getting it to all work together to make the project happen.”

The federal housing tax credits will provide the majority of funding. But it also took a collection of federal block grants and tax credits, including allocations to help lower-income agricultural workers in seafood and forestry. The funding was topped off by a \$400,000 donation from the Columbia Pacific Coordinated Care Organization, which oversees the region’s Medicaid recipients and will have a certain amount of



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian
Ken Yuill stands on property where new apartments will be located in Warrenton.

units set aside.

“I suspect we’ll mostly have workers in the seafood plants there,” Cornelius said of potential residents. “Oftentimes, they have difficulty finding housing nearby. And so our project is closer to those plants.”

Along with funding, affordable housing developments face challenges such as a not-in-my-backyard mentality from neighbors worried a project could hurt property values. But Ken Yuill, who owns the property in Chelsea Gardens, lives next door and would watch

the apartments rise from his backyard. He said the project represents a long-term win for the community.

“If this goes, it’s going to benefit so many families,” he said. “And yes, I would have loved to have all this commercial. I would have loved to have created a whole bunch of jobs. But with the commission on their thoughts because of the traffic and everything, to me, this was a first step that was going to benefit the neighborhood.”

Political will
If it takes over Trillium

House, the housing authority would control nearly 500 units of affordable housing in Clatsop, Tillamook and Columbia counties, said Todd Johnston, the executive director.

Trillium House, if approved by the city, could break ground in the spring and open in 2022. The project would be on a similar timeline as another \$60 million, 240-unit complex being developed near St. Helens, where Johnston said workers face a similar lack of workforce housing.

Whether the Trillium House concept can be replicated in other areas of the North Coast depends on finding developers like Walsh Construction willing to take a lower return in exchange for community benefit. The company’s founders, Bob and Tom Walsh, have always been community minded people wanting to benefit others while still making money from their projects, Steffen said.

Expanding the model will also take the political will to create more land for higher-density development, he said.

“For all the need for affordable housing at the coast, it appeared that there are about six or eight sites that could take a significant amount of homes,” Steffen said. “It doesn’t bode well for the delivery of a lot of homes. There’s a lot of land out there, but not a lot of it is urban-zoned.”

Warrenton looks to keep rallies off streets

By **EDWARD STRATTON**
The Astorian

WARRENTON — Police Chief Mathew Workman found it ironic when demonstrators at a recent pro-police Back the Blue rally defied an order, setting up a barbecue and table in a parking spot on Second Street near City Hall.

A week later, the same group set up the barbecue during a flag-waving event around the Warrenton Memorial Plaza.

“One of them got in one of my officer’s faces and was yelling and screaming at him because he nicely asked them to back it up,” Workman recently told the City Commission about the first event.

But after finding out city ordinances limit the police’s authority to move things like barbecues out of parking spaces, Workman asked city commissioners to clean up city code.

“Street and sidewalk offenses ... you have to be vending goods there,” he said. “And that doesn’t help us, because they were not vending. They were handing out food. And they were doing health code violations all day long, handing out food in a public right of way like that. But we don’t enforce health codes.”

Permits to occupy part of a right of way go through the city’s Public Works Department. Collin Stelzig, the city’s public works director, said he wouldn’t see giving a permit to a rally like Back the Blue’s unless the entire street was shut down to make it safe for pedestrians and drivers.

The city needs to look at bifurcating the permit process so that vendors can still go through the Public Works Department, but political gatherings need to go through a more exten-

sive event permit process, Workman said.

The conversation later expanded to what sort of events the city should be allowing on its property.

Workman didn’t think political rallies were right for Warrenton Memorial Plaza, which is located next to a state highway and lacks nearby parking except for the post office and the Dairy Maid restaurant.

City Commissioner Rick Newton didn’t think the city should allow any political events on its property.

“That slope is so slippery,” he said. “If you let one person, a campaign person, do something, then you have to let the neo-Nazis do it. You have to let every political affiliation under the sun do it.”

Workman said the city can’t deny a permit for someone paying to rent a city facility. City Manager Linda Engbretson disagreed, however, saying the city can have a policy requiring events in parks and other city property to be policy neutral. The city can also prevent things like barbecues from obstructing a sidewalk.

Mayor Henry Balensifer said that while the city wants to keep people out of the streets and away from traffic, he also sees Warrenton Memorial Plaza as a natural, centralized location for people to exercise their First Amendment right to free speech.

“There’s got to be a place for people to exercise their rights,” Balensifer said.

Despite the reservations from Workman, city commissioners largely agreed on allowing political events at Warrenton Memorial Plaza, albeit with no barbecues. Engbretson cautioned that whatever the city ultimately decides to allow will apply to everyone.

School: Current plan likely to be adjusted

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Rogozinski could not provide an answer for when the school district will know for certain which part of the plan they will be following this school year.

“Since we can’t know what the metrics will be in the weeks immediately leading to the start of the school year, there will remain a chance that we can plan for in-person learning and at the last minute have some or all of our students have to start the year learning entirely online,” he wrote in a letter to the community.

He acknowledged that the

uncertainty was stressful to students, families and teachers alike.

Oregon schools were required to submit blueprints outlining how they plan to conduct school in the fall to the state Department of Education this week.

The Astoria School District preemptively announced in July that it would offer only online or remote learning at the start of the school year. The school district had planned to offer a combination of online and in-person classes but reconsidered after looking at the limited pool of substitute teachers available and the number

of staff who are considered high risk or have high-risk family members.

Other school districts in the county have also explored hybrid models, or plan to stagger when student groups are in buildings.

Greg Morrill, the vice chairman of the Warrenton-Hammond school board, said the district is engaged in a difficult balancing act: considering the emotional well-being of students and their families who would benefit from school returning as usual alongside public safety concerns during a pandemic.

“There’s not a perfect

answer,” he said. The plan the school district has developed is the best one they have in the moment. Likely, he added, it will have to be adjusted.

The Warrenton-Hammond School District is also offering a virtual school option. Warrenton Academy of Virtual Education is sponsored through the school district and is intended for students and parents who prefer online learning.

Rogozinski said the academy has generated interest in the community, with more than 100 students already enrolled and around 80 more expressing interest.

Brown: Endorsed City Councilor Cockrum for mayor

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Brown, 44, a native of Gearhart, returned in 2006 and serves as the general manager and PGA professional at the Highlands Golf Club.

Brown purchased the golf course in Manzanita in 2018. He has also worked as the golf professional at Astoria Golf & Country Club, Bandon Dunes Golf Resort and Pumpkin Ridge Golf Club.

Brown earned a degree in business at Linfield College and attended school in Gearhart and Seaside.

In making the announcement, Brown endorsed City Councilor Paulina Cockrum for mayor.

Brown and Cockrum served together on the Planning Commission as chair and vice chair. They have agreed that protecting the comprehensive plan and giving residents a voice

in the community are top priorities.

“Paulina has years of experience serving on the Planning Commission and on the City Council,” Brown said in a statement. “It’s been incredible to have her as our council president these last few years where she continues to work diligently to preserve what makes Gearhart so special. It’s been an honor to work with everyone and help keep Gearhart

the quiet residential community we all know and love.”

He also encouraged Reita Fackerell and Dan Jesse to run again for City Council in November.

“With Paulina and Councilor (Kerry) Smith, I hope they will continue the incredible work that our residents, city and council have accomplished together the last four years.”

App: Only source of business for some

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“I just found it really unreasonable, and most small businesses can’t afford that,” Yiu said.

They engineered Kartbites hoping it could provide the same function without the large fees.

They focused on food carts because they saw how they were struggling with social distancing and contactless service.

“Six feet of distance is actually really hard to achieve,” Yiu said about working in a food cart. “So it’s hard to hire more people.”

Food delivery through apps became the only source of business for some food carts and restaurants, so they had no way around the fees.

In July, Portland made it illegal for third-party food delivery services to charge restaurants more than 10% in commission fees for the duration of the pandemic.

Yiu and Dua hope their

app can outlast the pandemic. They also hope to find a way to give back. They received an anonymous donation earlier this year at Malka to go toward providing free meals to people in need.

Yiu and Dua created a pay-it-forward program to use donation money to occasionally provide free meals at Malka for a few hours. They plan to integrate this program into the app, notifying customers that free food is available at different locations, or providing meal coverage to eligible users.

“There are a lot of people

who want to donate, but they don’t necessarily want to donate to big organizations,” Yiu said. “And some people need help but don’t want to be identified. This way, nobody knows they’re in need of help but they can still get free food.”

Yiu and Dua already have received donations that are specifically for free meals through Kartbites.

“It’s all through the carts. We just want to bring the community together and help with the COVID situation,” Yiu said.

“I think we can do this,” Dua said.

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