

IN BRIEF

Old Youngs Bay Bridge to close for repair work

The Old Youngs Bay Bridge will be closed for two days next week for maintenance work. The closure will begin at 8 a.m. on Tuesday and last until 8 a.m. on Aug. 27. Drivers can use the New Youngs Bay Bridge as a detour.

Election filing deadline approaches

Astoria has two City Council positions up for grabs in the November election, including one with no candidate so far. City Councilor Tom Brownson, who represents Ward 2 covering the South Slope and the Port of Astoria, recently filed for reelection in November and is so far running uncontested. City Councilor Jessamyn Grace West, who was appointed in 2019 to represent Uppertown, Alderbrook, Emerald Heights and Tongue Point, chose not to run for election because of job and time constraints. No candidate has filed to replace her in Ward 4. Residents of Astoria for at least six months prior to the election and in one of the open wards can apply by 5 p.m. Tuesday with an election form and 13 signatures of support. Election information and forms may be found on the city’s website. Questions may be directed to Susan Brooks, the city’s director of finance and administrative services, at 503-325-5821.

Sunset Empire park district looks to buy middle school

SEASIDE — The Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District will seek public input on a potential purchase of Broadway Middle School. A community survey will be available for response from Aug. 31 to Sept. 14. Community presentations are scheduled for Sept. 8 and Sept. 9, and virtual online tours or by small groups in-person are planned for mid-September. “It’s been a little bit difficult for staff to know what angle to pursue, or if it was worth pursuit,” Skyler Archibald, the executive director of the park district, said at Tuesday’s board meeting. “What is important for staff is knowing the board is interested in the property and support exploration of it. “I think it’s in the best interests of the district to move at a swift pace to gather this feedback, assess it and take the next steps depending on what the board decides to do.” The school, at 1120 Broadway, is among Seaside School District properties relocating this fall to a new location outside of the tsunami inundation zone. — The Astorian

Pacific County planners urge vacation rental ban

SOUTH BEND, Wash. —After being asked for further deliberations by county commissioners last month, the Pacific County Planning Commission is now recommending that the county take stronger action on limiting short-term vacation rentals in residential neighborhoods by disallowing new vacation rentals entirely. The Planning Commission met virtually for more than an hour last week, its first meeting since March. There, five members of the commission debated and ultimately agreed to recommend that the county forbid new vacation rentals permits in R-1 zones. — Chinook Observer

DEATH

Aug. 14, 2020

HARTLEY, Brian Lewis, 37, of Warrenton, died in Portland. Caldwell’s Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

CORRECTION

Wrong day — Chalk the Vote, an event marking the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, will take place from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. next Wednesday on the Duane Street sidewalk outside the Clatsop County Courthouse. An item in In Brief on A2 on Tuesday incorrectly said the event would take place this Wednesday.

ON THE RECORD

DUII • Riley Lucas Zaik Hauser, 22, of Aloha, was arrested Tuesday on U.S. Highway 26 for driving under the influence of intoxicants. • Kasper Adam Kukula, 30, of Revelstoke, British Columbia, was arrested Tuesday on 18th Street and Marine Drive in Astoria for DUII.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

THURSDAY
Gearhart Planning Commission, 5 p.m., work session, Gearhart Fire Station, 670 Pacific Way.
Seaside Transportation Advisory Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

theAstorian

Established July 1, 1873
(USPS 035-000)

Published Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday by EO Media Group, 949 Exchange St., PO Box 210, Astoria, OR 97103 Telephone 503-325-3211, 800-781-3211 or Fax 503-325-6573. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Astorian, PO Box 210, Astoria, OR 97103-0210

DailyAstorian.com

MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MEMBER CERTIFIED AUDIT OF CIRCULATIONS, INC.

Circulation phone number:
503-325-3211

Periodicals postage paid at Astoria, OR

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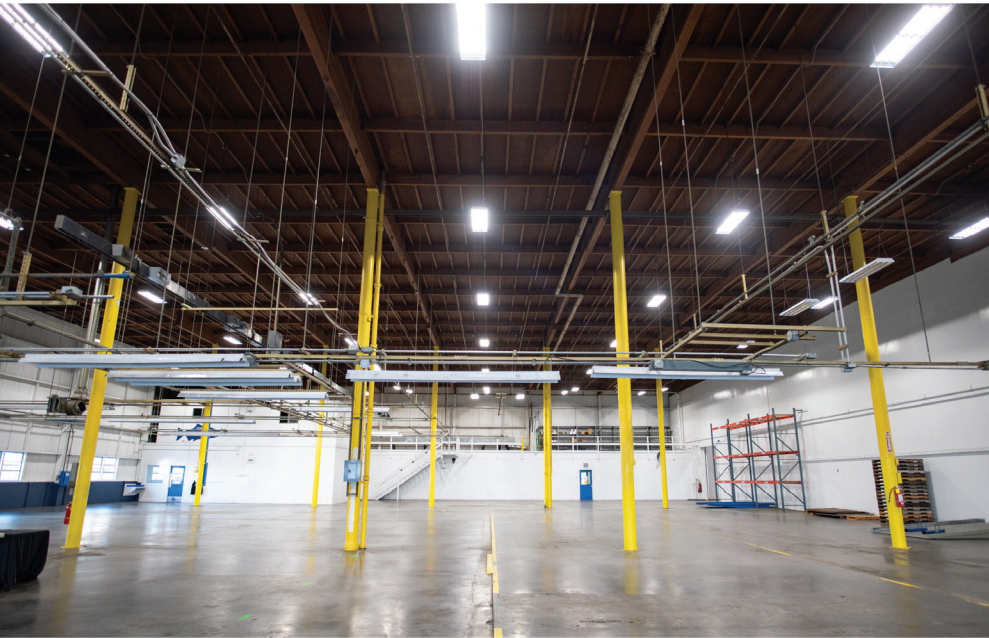
Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

A wreath was placed at Pier 39 to mark the deaths of a Hillsboro couple whose car fell into the Columbia River on Sunday.

Fort George warehousing project on track

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Astorian

Fort George Brewery is on track to brew by the end of the year at Astoria Warehousing after soil conditions proved better than expected. The brewery purchased Astoria Warehousing, a sprawling campus of warehouses on the riverfront formerly used for labeling cans, to house an expanded brewery, cooler, canning and distribution. The state Department of Environmental Quality required that Fort George research and clean up underground petroleum contamination found around the warehouses, likely from a former gas station and car wash across Marine Drive. To kick-start the development, the state awarded Fort George a \$1 million grant for the cleanup. Chris Nemlowill, the co-owner of Fort George, said the contaminated area under the warehouses ended up being more isolated than originally thought. “At this point, any other environmental cleanup costs over the next two years, we’ll pay for those out of our pocket,” Nemlowill said. “We’re feeling extremely fortunate that things were better than anticipated. That’s not usually what happens with an environmental cleanup.” Astoria is the intermediary that accepts grant dispersals and passes them on to Blue Jumpsuit LLC, Fort



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Fort George Brewery received \$1 million from the state to clean up petroleum contamination beneath Astoria Warehousing.

George’s property holding company for the warehouses. On Monday, the City Council approved accepting the final \$600,000 of the grant. The cleanup grant from the state cleared the way for Fort George to secure a \$12 million low-interest loan from Craft3, which secured financing from the competitive federal New Market Tax Credit program. The loan provided the money to buy the warehouses and a 60-barrel brew-house from Portland brewery Bridgeport Brewing after it closed. The new brewery will dramatically increase Fort George’s production capacity for its most popular beers. Local governments also backed Fort George becom-

ing the first to take advantage of the Clatsop Enterprise Zone, saving the company an estimated \$617,000 in property taxes over the next decade on new equipment. In exchange, Fort George promised to invest at least \$12.5 million and create at least 35 full-time jobs earning at least 130% of Clatsop County’s annual average wage. Fort George still pays property taxes on the land and buildings. The redevelopment of Astoria Warehousing had been held up by a glut of building permits as Astoria is swamped with construction activity despite the coronavirus pandemic and only recently added a new com-

munity development director. But the good news on the environmental cleanup has put Fort George back on track with its goal of brewing and canning beer in the warehouses by the end of the year, Nemlowill said. The need for an expansion has never been more acute. Fort George is selling more beer than ever, Nemlowill said, albeit in cans, which don’t make the same profit margins as draft lines at bars and restaurants limited by the pandemic. “We’ve pivoted to putting like 99% of our beers in cans, and fortunately we were able to do that,” he said. “We cannot make enough beer right now.”

Port looks to future after airport manager retires

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Astorian

Since he was hired in 2015 to manage the Astoria Regional Airport, Gary Kobes has brought millions in federal aviation grants and shepherded projects such as a new Life Flight Network hangar and a potential new fish meal plant at a nearby industrial park. When Kobes retires as airport manager in December, the Port of Astoria will parcel out his duties to other

staff as the agency tries to weather the coronavirus pandemic and a trade war between the U.S. and China that have decimated revenue. The Port, under pressure from the Airport Advisory Committee and some commissioners not to lose momentum at the Warrenton airport, faces a question of how long to let the agency go without an on-site aviation expert. Will Isom, the Port’s executive director, on Tuesday outlined a plan to fold

many of the airport’s leases and other contracts into the plates of existing administrative staff in Astoria. He announced the promotion of Matt McGrath, the Port’s director of operations, to deputy director with more oversight of airport functions. Kobes would stay on through most of next year as a contractor overseeing federally funded airport improvement projects. He would also help shepherd the development of a new fish meal plant by global animal feed company Scoular at the Airport Industrial Park. But Kobes would only be at the airport one or two days a week, Isom said. Henry Balensifer, the mayor of Warrenton, an employee at the airport through manufacturer JBT Lektro and chairman of the Airport Advisory Committee, said the group wants a commitment from the Port to hire a full-time manager in the long term. “We just don’t want to get forgotten,” Balensifer said. “We want to make sure and draw the Port Commission’s attention to the fact that the airport isn’t simply just something you write grants for. There are certain relationships and continual

communication that must be cultivated, developed and continued that Gary has done a great job with.” Port Commissioner Robert Stevens also sounded alarm bells about not having an aviation expert on hand at the airport. Commissioner James Campbell said the Port might be able to find someone retiring out of the military to take a part-time role. Isom said he is sensitive to the concerns that the airport not be neglected, and that it warrants a full-time manager, but that the Port needs to be careful in how it allocates limited monies. Isom did not provide a timeline on when a new full-time airport manager could be hired. Kobes said the airport could probably operate without a formal manager for eight months to a year. “I do think there needs to be a period of transition here where it doesn’t make a lot of sense to right away and go out and hire that full-time person,” Isom said. “I think we go through this transition phase and really get a better understanding of what that role looks like going forward, thereby who we would hire and what sort of skill set we want.”



Gary Kobes

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