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CORONAVIRUS

Bonamici presses for answers on outbreak

Calls for meeting by state, Pacific Seafood

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici on Tuesday called on the Oregon Health Authority and Pacific Seafood to provide more information and address community concerns about the coronavirus outbreak at the Warrenton plant.

Pacific Seafood has said 95 workers have tested positive for the virus, the largest workplace outbreak in Clatsop County during the pandemic.

In a letter to Patrick Allen, the director of the Oregon Health Authority, the congresswoman said she is “deeply concerned.”

“In the outreach my office has done with local leaders, we have learned that the community lacks information about this outbreak and urgently needs answers that will expedite containment of the spread in this small, rural community,” the Oregon Democrat said.

Bonamici requested that Allen work with Pacific Seafood to convene a virtual community meeting, with simultaneous Spanish language interpretation, as soon as possible so the public can ask questions and receive information.

“This outbreak threatens the health, well-being and economic stability of many Clatsop County residents, including businesses and workers who are afraid of a new wave of closures,” she said.

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Pacific Seafood drops Astoria housing plan

Seafood processor sought 80 beds for workers

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Astorian

Pacific Seafood has dropped a proposal for an 80-bed dormitory at Astoria Pointe, ending a battle with neighbors concerned about the potential effects on their quality of life and property values.

The seafood processor, needing space to house a yearly influx of seasonal workers for the Warrenton plant, initially proposed 120 beds at the former drug treatment center in Astoria that has been vacant since 2018.

Pacific Seafood later lowered the proposal to 80 beds after an outcry from neighbors and agreed to a set of accountability measures, including daily shuttles

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Photos by Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

The new bus stop could cost between \$250,000 to \$300,000.

New bus stop in Warrenton could showcase mass transit

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Astorian

WARRENTON — Over time, the bus stop in front of Wauna Federal Credit Union has become one of the most popular in Clatsop County, providing the jumping-off point for shoppers going to and from the North Coast Retail Center.

But the bus stop is but a bench and a sign along U.S. Highway 101, without shelter, that can leave many a rider waiting in the wind and rain.

The Sunset Empire Transportation District is pursuing a grant with partners in the Northwest Oregon Transit Alliance to spend more than \$1 million in new statewide transit taxes on five new bus stops, including one for more than \$250,000 at the retail center.

The stops would be paid for by the 0.1% payroll tax approved by the state Legislature in 2017 to help finance mass transit improvements. The transit alliance must finish designing the five proposed stops and submit the joint application by early November.

Jeff Hazen, the executive director of the transit district, recently went before the Warrenton City Commission to get a letter of support.

“That’s a really lonely bench that’s kind of sad and pathetic-looking out there, especially with our weather,” Hazen told commissioners.

The new stop, which Hazen estimates could cost between \$250,000 and \$300,000, would include a dedicated pullout for buses, a large shelter, bike racks and a repair station with pressurized air and basic tools.

Hazen described it as an investment in the viability of Sunset Empire



An improved bus stop is planned near the North Coast Retail Center in Warrenton.

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Jeff Hazen, the executive director of the transit district

to potential new riders.

“People can see our buses, but our buses have been there for 20 years now, and some people don’t even see them,” he said. “But if you’ve got a fixed bus stop that’s been built out, I think that brings that visibility up quite a bit, especially if you have the amenities.”

Improving transit

The alliance, which covers Clatsop, Columbia, Tillamook, Lincoln and Benton counties, was formed in

2012 through a U.S. Department of Energy grant to better coordinate bus service and take cars off highways.

Over the years, the bus providers in the alliance have synchronized their schedules, websites and other policies to make riding and planning carless trips throughout the region more seamless. The grant for new bus stops is the alliance’s first request for construction money from the new transit tax.

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Crab pots stacked at the Port of Ilwaco.

Luke Whittaker/Chinook Observer

New crab rules meant to protect whales

Regulations to avoid entanglement

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Astorian

New regulations for commercial Dungeness crab fishermen in Oregon aim to get boats on the water earlier in the season and reduce the amount of gear to avoid tangling with endangered whales.

The regulations, adopted in September, involve a number of key changes to how the fishery is

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managed, including a 20% reduction in the number of pots a permit holder is allowed to fish with later in the season.

The state is also tightening regulations around when fishermen can get replacement tags for gear reported as lost and lowering requirements for how full of meat crabs must be along the southern

coast in order for the season to open.

The late-season gear reduction will be in place for the next three seasons. Fishery managers will evaluate how effective this measure is at reducing the risk of whale entanglement while still enabling an economically viable fishery.

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