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Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

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State House candidates split on taxes, spending

Boothe-Schmidt, Weber appear at Astoria forum

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Astorian

State House candidates Debbie Boothe-Schmidt and Suzanne Weber faced off at Clatsop Community College in Astoria during an election forum Tuesday night with different visions on taxes and spending.

Their differences emerged when the candidates were asked about restructuring Oregon's tax system.

The issue has taken on significance given the state Legislature's passage last year of the Student Success Act, a corporate activity tax on large companies estimated to add \$1 billion a year in education funding. As of January, businesses with taxable activity of more than \$1 million must pay \$250, plus 0.57% of gross receipts after crossing the threshold.

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Astoria candidates talk riverfront development, emergency planning

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Astorian

Candidates for two seats on the Astoria City Council pitched themselves to the public on Tuesday night during an election forum at Clatsop Community College.

In Ward 2, City Councilor Tom Brownson faces a challenge from Floyd Holcom, the owner of Pier 39 and a former Port of Astoria commissioner, to represent the city's South Slope and parts of the Port.

Running for Ward 4 to replace City Councilor Jessamyn Grace West are Tom Hilton, who runs Hanthorn Crab Co. on Pier 39; Joshua Conklin, a local service-sector worker and former hotel manager; and Lisa Morley, a behavioral workplace safety consultant who leads the community group Friends of Birch Field and Park in Alderbrook.

Brownson, who grew up in Clatsop County, has touted his four years of experience on the City Council as being invaluable in

moving the city forward.

Holcom and Hilton, friends who grew up in Astoria and business partners through their ventures on Pier 39, have leaned on similar arguments for having multigenerational Astorians and local businesspeople on the City Council.

Conklin, who grew up in and around Astoria, has presented himself as a representative of the working class and of marginalized populations, such as the LGBTQ community. At 31 years old, he is also the youngest candidate.

Morley, a workplace behavioral safety consultant who worked for Intel and relocated to Astoria five years ago, called herself a scientist with an ability to effectively problem-solve. She used as an example her work leading the community group that took over maintenance of the Birch Field and Park in Alderbrook after it faced a possible sale.

During the forum, Holcom was critical of city staff and Mayor Bruce Jones, saying they have not been communicative enough with residents and business owners or about emergency preparation and support during the coronavirus pandemic.

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County wants to take lead on outbreaks

Written agreement possible with Pacific Seafood

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

Clatsop County wants to take the lead in responding to any future coronavirus outbreaks at Pacific Seafood in Warrenton.

County Manager Don Bohn said the county is working toward a written agreement with the seafood processor on testing, quarantine, contact tracing and other outreach. The agreement would define the roles of the county, the company and the Oregon Health Authority when workplace virus cases are detected.

"Our goal is to have the county play the local public health administration function," Bohn told The Astorian on Tuesday. "But we need to do that with an understanding with Pacific Seafood. And we need to have OHA also understand how that's going to work so that we can support each other."

Dan Occhipinti, the executive vice president of corporate support for Pacific Seafood, said the company looks forward to establishing a written document.

"We have had several positive and productive conversations with Clatsop County and the Oregon Health Authority regarding ways to improve

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City sides with developer on live-work units

Novel housing option at Cannery Loft

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Astorian

The Astoria City Council on Monday tentatively cleared the way for live-work units on the ground floor of the Cannery Loft Condominiums, directing staff to come back in two weeks with guidelines to quell uncertainty over the novel concept.

Ted Forcum, who owns several residential units at Cannery Loft near Pier 39 and markets the 10 commercial spaces below, has struggled for years to get tenants. As demand warrants, he plans to split the 1,000-square-foot units between 500 square feet of commercial storefront and similarly sized one-bedroom apartments.

The Planning Commission had denied Forcum's proposal because the city lacks a set of rules for live-work spaces, similar to proprietor's quarters allowed conditionally in other parts of the city. Neighbors at Cannery Loft have also

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Postal Service studies new post office in Warrenton

Pressure from Wyden, Bonamici

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Astorian

WARRENTON — The U.S. Postal Service is studying whether Warrenton needs a new post office after pressure from members of Oregon's congressional delegation.

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden and U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici, who visited the city's aging post office near the corner of Harbor Drive and Main Avenue in August, wrote to U.S. Postmaster General Louis

DeJoy last month about its inadequate condition.

"Resourceful U.S. Postal Service employees have been forced to store mail and packages outdoors under tarps during high-volume periods," the Democrats wrote. "Outdoor storage obviously poses a security risk, and it is untenable on Oregon's North Coast, which is well-known for its wet and windy winters. This situation is likely to result in damage or destruction of mail."

The Postal Service leases the Warrenton building through at least October 2024 from Darb Fishing LLC, owned by the Bjork family in Astoria. Cory Brown, a spokesman for the Postal Service, wrote back to Bonamici and Wyden in late September, saying the building was studied and deemed sufficient for local demand as of 2017.

'RESOURCEFUL U.S. POSTAL SERVICE EMPLOYEES HAVE BEEN FORCED TO STORE MAIL AND PACKAGES OUTDOORS UNDER TARPS DURING HIGH-VOLUME PERIODS. OUTDOOR STORAGE OBVIOUSLY POSES A SECURITY RISK, AND IT IS UNTENABLE ON OREGON'S NORTH COAST.'

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden and U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici

"However, a new study has been undertaken to review the current situation," Brown wrote. "In the event that it is determined that additional capacity is required, then the Postal Service, in compliance with all regulatory requirements, may examine options to expand service."

The Postal Service leases an even smaller part-time facility in Hammond through November 2024. Brown wrote that the Postal Service has no plans to relocate in Hammond.

City Manager Linda Engbretson said there was talk when she started working for Warrenton in

1995 of relocating the post office across Second Street from City Hall on land occupied by the Public Works Department.

"They had originally even put down some earnest money on where the public works site is," she said. "And then there was some underground cleanup that had to be done, and the funding from the federal government went away. So it's a long time coming."

Bonamici and Wyden's push for a new post office in Warrenton comes amid widespread concerns that President Donald Trump is restricting the Postal Service because of his concerns about mail-in voting in the upcoming election. In August, Bonamici and Wyden defended the Postal Service as a critical lifeline they say has been undermined by the president.



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