

IN BRIEF

Coast Guard urges caution on beaches because of king tides

The U.S. Coast Guard urged people to stay vigilant on beaches over the weekend while storm, high wind and hazardous sea warnings are in effect.

King tides and sneaker waves can sweep people away. Cold water temperatures can increase the danger of hypothermia, and rough seas can make search and rescue operations more challenging.

Officials also encourage the public to stay away from low-lying coastal areas.

“Sneaker waves represent one of the largest weather threats to beachgoers in the Pacific Northwest,” Lt. Micaela Crabtree, a command duty officer for Coast Guard District 13, said in a statement. “These large, deadly waves usually follow a period of calm which often results in individuals relaxing their awareness of the potential dangers of the ocean. It is essential to remain vigilant.”

Warrenton extends permits for Pacific Seafood dorms

WARRENTON — The Warrenton Planning Commission on Thursday upheld city staff’s one-year extension of building permits for Pacific Seafood’s proposed dormitories in Hammond.

The Planning Commission approved conditional use and site design review permits a year ago for Pacific Seafood to turn part of a metal fabrication shop on Warrenton Drive into dormitory housing for up to 90 seasonal workers. The permits were set to expire Thursday.

Pacific Seafood argues the dorms are necessary to operate a new plant in Warrenton at full capacity but has not begun construction. Michael Robinson, an attorney for Pacific Seafood, said the company is hesitant to move forward during the coronavirus pandemic but still plans to build out the dorms.

Mark Barnes, the interim city planning director, extended the permits for another year. Scott Widdicombe, a neighbor on a nearby cul-de-sac, appealed the extension to the Planning Commission.

Widdicombe argues he was deprived of his rights to participate because the company did not share a floor plan for the dorms. He also argues the city has not taken into consideration state Occupational Safety and Health Administration requirements.

— The Astorian

DEATHS

Nov. 12, 2020

GUNN, George Isaac, 97, of Astoria, died in Astoria. Caldwell’s Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

Nov. 11, 2020

WILSON, Ethel Louise, 98, of Astoria, died

in Astoria. Caldwell’s Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

Nov. 10, 2020

LONG, Esther, 84, of Seaside, died in Seaside. Hughes-Ransom Mortuary is in charge of the arrangements.

ON THE RECORD

Theft

• Frank Nimz, 39, was arrested Sunday in Warrenton for theft in the second degree.

DUII

• Elias Aaron Ayala, 33, of Tillamook, was arrested Thursday on Alternate U.S. Highway 101 in Warrenton for driving under the influence of intoxicants.

• Peter H E Uander-Scharin, 61, of Astoria, was arrested Wednesday on 10th Street and

Commercial Street in Astoria for DUII, reckless driving and cited for no operator’s license and failing to stop for a pedestrian.

• Makani James Foster, 35, Bolinas, California, was arrested Tuesday on Pier 2 in Astoria for DUII and reckless driving.

• Kaythryn Marie Richardson, 57, of Beaverton, was arrested Monday on Roosevelt Drive and Avenue I in Seaside for DUII.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

MONDAY

Jewell School District Board, 6 p.m., Jewell Library, 83874 Highway 103.

Astoria City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 1095 Duane St.

TUESDAY

Union Health District of Clatsop County, 8 a.m., Seaside Civic and Convention Center, Necanicum Room.

Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District Board of Directors, 5:15 p.m., 1225 Avenue A., Seaside.

Astoria Historic Landmarks Commission, 5:30 p.m., City Hall, 1095 Duane St.

Seaside School District, 6 p.m., (electronic meeting).

Shoreline Sanitary District Board, 7 p.m., Gearhart Heritage Station, 33496 West Lake Lane, Warrenton.

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A hiker takes photos of crashing waves at Bald Point in Ecola State Park on Sunday afternoon.

Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Treatment: FDA approved Evrysdi in August

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The family spent years undergoing intensive physical therapy, trying alternative medicines and going to the hospital for screenings. Alina wasn’t diagnosed until after Spinraza, the first treatment for spinal muscular atrophy, was approved by the Food and Drug Administration and screening for the disease was covered by insurance.

“Normally ... you could not be diagnosed with SMA until you lost a skill ... meaning you lost the ability to walk, or had lost the ability to go up stairs or whatever,” Trudy Citovic said.

A little over a month after her diagnosis, Alina began receiving Spinraza, a medicine delivered through a spinal tap with a serrated needle.

“The spinal fluid is like a balloon, and you’re trying to poke it with a knife without making any spill out,” Alina said. “The first time ... I ended up having a spinal fluid leak. I couldn’t walk for a few days.”

Alina had to be sedated and fitted with an IV to draw blood before each treatment. She developed a fear of needles, was diagnosed with medical trauma and received therapy.

FDA approval

The FDA last year approved Zolgensma, a one-time intravenous gene therapy targeting the root of the disease, but only useful for children younger than 2 years old. The Citovics kept track of clinical trials for a new at-home, oral treatment called Evrysdi, which the FDA approved in August.

Instead of traveling to Portland for blood draws and spinal taps, the family now receives a refrigerated package in the mail with nearly a month’s worth of the liquid oral medication. Alina fills a plunger with the medicine and squirts it into her mouth.

“It tastes exactly like strawberries,” she said. “And I think it’s a lot easier. Sometimes after you’ve had it for a while, it tastes like soda pop.”

Dr. Erika Finanger, the Citovics’ physician and the director of the pediatric neuromuscular program at Doernbecher, said Alina is the only of her 30 patients who have so far switched from the spinal tap to the newer oral treatment, for which there is little data to compare effectiveness.

“I think ... this will become more common,” Finanger said of the oral treatment. “New things, some families are happy with



Photos by Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

From left, Trudy, Alina and Djordje Citovic, along with their dog, 'Gigi', sit in their living room in Astoria.



Alina Citovic’s dog, 'Gigi', kisses her face while playing. Gigi traveled with Alina to her medical appointments in Portland.



Djordje Citovic pulls a box of Evrysdi from the basement fridge. The medication is used to treat his daughter’s spinal muscular atrophy.

the response they’ve seen from the previous medicine, and they aren’t yet willing to move to something different, because it seems less known.

“I obviously believe both of them work, or I wouldn’t offer it as an option at all,” she said. “But it’s just hard to compare.”

The Citovics are waiting to see how effective the oral medicine ultimately proves, but said Alina has shown improved stamina and

strength. Meanwhile, they are campaigning for Oregon to test for spinal muscular atrophy at birth.

Early detection

Finanger said 33 other states already include spinal

muscular atrophy in their universal newborn screenings, allowing doctors to diagnose and treat babies with the one-time gene therapy before they show symptoms of the disease. Screening for the disease has been recommended in Oregon for 2 1/2 years, she said.

“It’s substantially more effective if you give it early, before children have weakness,” she said. “Waiting until six months of age for the babies or later ... you’re just never going to get as much benefit from any of the medicines if you treat them once the kids have symptoms.”

Since learning about the disease, state Sen. Betsy Johnson said she has spoken with Finanger, Trudy Citovic, pediatric physicians and insurance lobbyists all pushing for expanded newborn screenings. There is momentum to draft legislation, Johnson said, but there are cost and other considerations.

“It’s an interesting conundrum,” the Scappoose Democrat said. “Because some of those folks that I spoke with said that the incidence of the genetic mutation is so low in comparison to the ratio of births in Oregon, and that would be a consideration. Cost would be a consideration. The source of the payment would be a consideration.”

“What I learned in the briefing with Dr. Finanger was that for some of these kids, you compare the cost of the screening with the cost of a lifetime of care, the screening is de minimis.”

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