

IN BRIEF

Seaside man sentenced for drunken-driving crash

A Seaside man was sentenced Friday to 150 days in jail and four years probation for a drunken-driving crash that left a man seriously injured.

Erick Yetzael Mendez Lopez, 23, pleaded guilty to driving under the influence of intoxicants, assault in the fourth degree, recklessly endangering another person, reckless driving and two counts of failure to perform the duties of a driver with property damage.

Justin Powell, of Seaside, was walking across 12th Avenue and N. Holladay Drive in December when he was struck by a vehicle driven by Mendez Lopez.

Powell suffered numerous fractures, a laceration, a concussion and other injuries that have required surgeries.

As part of his probation, Judge Dianne Darling required Mendez Lopez to present on his experience at a local high school on an annual basis.

Powell filed a lawsuit in May seeking more than \$1.1 million for negligence.

The lawsuit also accuses Naked Wines in Oregon and Damarkom, doing business as Times Theater and Public House, of negligence for allegedly serving Mendez Lopez alcohol prior to the crash while he was visibly intoxicated.

Razor clamming closed on the coast

Razor clamming is closed along the Oregon Coast.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife announced the closure on Friday after samples showed the marine biotoxin domoic acid exceeded the closure limit.

The state recommended people throw away and not eat razor clams harvested since Nov. 16.

Mussel, bay clam and crab harvesting remains open.

State offers free fishing weekend

Fishing is free in Oregon on the Friday and Saturday after Thanksgiving.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife will not require fishing license or tags to fish, crab or clam. The free fishing days are part of a campaign to encourage people to get outdoors after the holiday.

All other fishing regulations including closures, bag limits and size restrictions still apply.

“Getting outdoors to fish can be a safe and healthy activity right now, and a good respite during this difficult time,” Curt Melcher, the director of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, said in a statement. “We do ask all who participate to please follow all the virus precautions so everyone has a safe time this free fishing weekend.”

Parks waive fees after Thanksgiving

Day-use parking fees will be waived in 25 state parks across Oregon for the day after Thanksgiving, including at sites inside Fort Stevens State Park near Warrenton.

“We recognize that being outdoors makes us feel better and is a break from the stresses of 2020,” Lisa Sumption, the director of the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, said in a statement.

“In this unconventional year, we feel it is especially important to honor this tradition as thanks to Oregonians for supporting us through our toughest times.”

—The Astorian

DEATHS

Nov. 21, 2020

CRUMP, Roland David, 84, of Long Beach, Washington, died in Woodburn. Ocean View Funeral & Cremation Service of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

Nov. 20, 2020

BEARD, Dennis Aron, 63, of Astoria, died

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

Nov. 19, 2020

HOLT, Laurena June, 66, of Arch Cape, died in Seaside. Caldwell's Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

ON THE RECORD

Credit card fraud

• Quinlan Hundley, 25, was arrested Saturday in Warrenton for fraudulent use of a credit card, theft in the third degree and identity theft.

• Kayla Sandoval, 28, of Astoria, was arrested Saturday in Warrenton for fraudulent use of a credit card, theft in the second degree and identity theft.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

TUESDAY

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

Knappa School District Board, 5:30 p.m., (electronic meeting).

Warrenton City Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 225 S. Main Ave.

Seaside Airport Advisory Committee, 6 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

WEDNESDAY

Astoria Parks Board, 6:45 a.m., City Hall, 1095 Duane St.

Gearhart moves to amend downtown zoning

City Council votes to proceed with code changes

By **R.J. MARX**
The Astorian

GEARHART — A nearly two-year process turned around the bend Thursday night as the City Council reviewed recommendations of the Planning Commission to clean up outdated code language, make downtown commercial zoning less restrictive and encourage new businesses.

If adopted, the amendments could bring outdoor and sidewalk seating to neighborhood markets and limit chain or formula use businesses with four or more locations.

The amendments would eliminate restrictions that require neighborhood cafes to be open 11 months a year and lift the 10 p.m. closing time.

Amendments would bring existing stores into compliance with the code by eliminating restrictive language, members of City Council said at a public hearing to consider the changes.

Downtown businesses would be able to use 50% of their property for residential purposes.

Changes would allow retailers, including the Pacific Way Cafe, Sweet Shop and By the Way, to continue operations as they are rather than face enforcement for violating terms of the code.

“This is going to really help not only existing businesses, but help new businesses come into Gearhart too, hopefully a new grocery market, as well,” Mayor Matt Brown said.

The City Council tasked planning commissioners with the revisions in early 2019 after the closing of Gearhart's only grocery.

The amendments aim to

modernize language in the code to allow businesses to have more options, increase revenue and be more successful in the downtown C-1 zone.

According to the comprehensive plan, the city must limit commercial activity to a level compatible with residential character.

After a public hearing in October, a group of business owners said the proposed changes remain overly restrictive, would make it difficult to seek financing and discourage new businesses from opening.

Business owners had sought to lift a requirement for a conditional use permit for retail stores and neighborhood cafes.

“Not only would this move to make two more outright uses save the city money in administrative costs, it would ease the city administrator's job of enforcement and eliminate the costs associated with

appeals,” the coalition of 11 business owners wrote the Planning Commission earlier this month.

The new amendments fall short of listing retail and restaurants as unconditional uses.

The comprehensive plan, which stresses the city's residential nature, directed much of the language in the amendments, City Attorney Peter Watts said at Thursday's meeting.

“The goal is serve the community, not attract tourists,” Watts said. “There are limits to what we can do because of the very restrictive language in our comprehensive plan.”

City councilors voted 4-1 to approve a vote on the first reading of the amendments at the city's Dec. 2 meeting.

Brown and councilors Rita Fackerell, Paulina Cockrum and Kerry Smith voted in favor, while Councilor Dan Jesse voted against the move.

Liberty Theatre raises \$175,000 at virtual gala

By **JONATHAN WILLIAMS**
The Astorian

The Liberty Theatre raised \$175,000 on Saturday night during the theater's virtual gala.

Most of the funds raised will go toward stewardship of the building and required repairs and maintenance. With largely no events at the theater since March, the Liberty has seen a \$400,000 reduction in the theater's operating budget.

But within minutes of the event starting, Jennifer Crockett, the Liberty Theatre's executive director, received texts alerting her the theater's website had crashed. It was overwhelmed with traffic. Crockett posted the gala video on Vimeo for the awaiting audience.

The gala featured performances by the band Horse Feathers, featuring Crockett on bass clarinet, 45th Parallel Universe Orchestra and Metropolitan Opera soprano Angela Meade.

The event had already raised \$60,000 before the start of the gala on Saturday night.

An anonymous donor provided a substantial fundraising boost, helping match \$50,000 for funds donated by midnight on Saturday.

Crockett said it was unbelievable how much money the theater was able to raise.

Many donations were \$25, \$50 and \$100 contributions, with “just so many people digging deep and supporting the theater right now when you know there's restaurants closing and bars closing and people are out of work, Crockett said. “It's been really overwhelming to know how many people you know love the theater and want to see us continue.”

Crockett said she does feel guilty talking about how much the theater raised while so many are still hurting because of the pandemic.

“Music, dance and theater have incredible power to inspire, unite and create joy, which we need now more



Photos by Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

ABOVE: The renovated concession stand at the Liberty Theatre. **BELOW:** The Liberty Theatre has completed major renovations this year, including a restored ticket kiosk and glass vestibule to block sound from Commercial Street.



than ever,” Crockett said in a prerecorded video for the gala.

She highlighted the Liberty's economic and cultural impact on the North Coast, citing the more than 130 events and nearly 20,000 attendees who come in a normal year.

The Liberty has developed a temporary mission statement to be a catalyst for the arts on the Oregon Coast, helping mentor a coalition

of 17 local performing arts groups in Clatsop County. The Liberty, with the help of state Sen. Betsy Johnson, successfully advocated for nearly half a million dollars in federal CARES Act relief funds for arts groups in the county.

Crockett said the Liberty is working to help arts groups in the coalition set up Giving Tuesday donate pages on their websites.

In a video message, Ted

Osborn, the Liberty's board president, explained the renovations that have already been completed at the theater through previous donations, including the renovated historic ticket kiosk and glass wall vestibule to dampen the noise from Commercial Street; drapes on the windows and entryways into the theater from the lobby for sound-proofing; and a new concession stand, featuring reclaimed material from other parts of the theater.

Future projects at the Liberty include expanding the stage and adding better lighting and sound and replacing the main curtain. Creating full dressing spaces and a green room for productions, along with a better loading area, are also on the docket.

Crockett is sure the show will go on.

“In March 2020 historic theaters across the nation and around the world went dark. But theaters never really go dark. Every stage has a single light that always stays on,” the video message said. “This ‘Ghost Light’ keeps shining to keep the spirits of past shows happy while waiting for audiences to return. Historic theaters have been through this before. And we'll be right here waiting on the other side of this one. Waiting for you to come back.”

Offices close for Thanksgiving

The Astorian

In observance of Thanksgiving Day on Thursday, all federal and state offices are closed. County offices and the Astoria, Warrenton, Gearhart, Seaside and Cannon Beach city halls are closed Thursday and Friday.

All U.S. post offices are closed Thursday, and there is no mail delivery.

The Astoria School District schools and Clatsop Community College are closed Thursday and Friday. The Knappa and Seaside (including Cannon Beach and Gearhart) school district schools are closed Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. The Jewell and Warrenton/Hammond school district schools are closed Monday

through Friday.

The Port of Astoria offices and services are closed Thursday and Friday.

Recology Western Oregon customers whose service day is Thursday will have their garbage picked up on Friday; customers whose service day is Friday will have pickup on Saturday. The transfer station is closed Thursday.

City of Warrenton garbage collection customers whose usual pickup day is Thursday will have their garbage picked up on Friday.

Sunset Empire Transportation (“The Bus”) is not running Thursday. The Astoria offices are closed. Thursday's paper is being delivered on Wednesday.

the Astorian

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