

Virus: County reports 10 new coronavirus cases

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Gyms, indoor pools, museums, theaters and other entertainment venues could operate at 25% of capacity, or up to 50 people, whichever is smaller.

Grocery stores, pharmacies, retail shops and shopping malls could operate at 50% of capacity.

Churches could open at 25% of capacity or 150 people indoors, whichever is smaller, and 200 people outdoors.

Businesses should urge employees to work remotely. Visits would be allowed in long-term care facilities.

The other counties in the state were designated moderate risk or lower risk, with fewer restrictions.

The Oregon Health Authority will assess virus data early next week and make a final determination of where each county will sit after the freeze ends on Wednesday. The health authority will reexamine the risk levels every two weeks.

Astoria Mayor Bruce Jones thought the one-size-fits-all approach of the governor’s two-week freeze was an overreach, and that local businesses could have continued to operate under restrictions without being closed entirely.

“This new risk-based formula is a big improvement,” he said. “I think it’s a much more balanced approach than the outright closures and two-week freeze.

“It’s going to provide a lot more stability for local businesses and nonprofits to generate some revenue and stay in business. I’m pleased with it, and certainly recognize that infection rates are skyrocketing nationally and in Oregon as well, and definitely we’re not taking this lightly.

“It’s critical that we continue being extremely vigilant here in Clatsop County.

“I think our goal as a community has to be, we want to do everything we can to pull that number down to moderate risk because that will give our restaurants, our stores, museums, nonprofit-

its, other establishments a greater capacity to generate revenue to be in business.

“So we want people to keep healthy and we want to pull those numbers down so that we can shift to the left on that risk scale.”

Clatsop County on Wednesday reported 10 new coronavirus cases.

The cases include a man and woman in their 20s and a woman in her 40s living in the southern part of the county. The others live in the northern part of the county and include two women and a man in their 40s, two women and a man in their 50s and a man in his 60s.

The county has recorded 362 virus cases since March. According to the county, 302 have recovered, five were hospitalized and one has died. The rest were recovering at home.

Brown’s announcement came amid a spike in virus cases as more Oregonians planned travel during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays.

The governors of Oregon, California and Washington issued a joint statement late last week that anyone traveling into their states should self-quarantine for two weeks.

Brown’s two-week freeze was followed by statements from some county sheriffs that they would not enforce the state restrictions. Several local government leaders, particularly in southern and Eastern Oregon, voted to either condemn or ignore the rules.

The Oregon Restaurant & Lodging Association sought a restraining order in federal court against the freeze. U.S. District Judge Karin Immergut rejected the request on Tuesday, saying that while she recognizes “the heavy burden” Brown’s order placed on the association’s members, “those burdens are outweighed by the benefits to all Oregonians.”

Gary Warner is a reporter for the Oregon Capital Bureau, a partnership between EO Media Group and Pamplin Media Group.

Car: Rowe takes a genuine interest in asking how customers are doing

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and I will be forever grateful for him for that, because it literally changed my life.”

Rowe believes he filled the man’s gas tank in the early morning of Nov. 20. He said he was struck when the man asked him about his aspirations and ambitions.

Rowe, 23, told him his goal was to start a career at Hampton Lumber, but that his plans were derailed after a shoulder injury.

The injury also meant he couldn’t drive the manual truck he bought in May and had been restoring. He was trying to get a loan to buy a \$2,000 used automatic vehicle.

Rowe said the man asked him what car lot the vehicle was on. Rowe told him it was a private sale.

Ring, the Warrenton Kia salesman who coordinated the purchase of the Sportage, said the man is from the southern Oregon Coast and was heading to Portland on business. He had an extra day, so he decided to spend a night in Astoria and went to fill his gas tank before heading out.

Ring described the man as religious.

“He made it very clear that things in his life turned around for him when he found faith and spirituality and that that was really what sort of turned his life around,” Ring said. “He was like, ‘I’m fortunate enough to

be in a position where I can do this for somebody,’ and he said to me, ‘After you talk to Bradley, you’ll understand why I did it.’

“And he was right. You talk to Bradley and it’s like, well, this kid obviously is trying his hardest in life, and you get knocked down.”

He said all the comments on the Facebook post reinforce the positive feelings people in the community have toward Rowe.

Rowe, who graduated from Astoria High School, said he tries to take care with every interaction he has with his customers. He takes a genuine interest in asking how their day is going.

“I try and be a little more open at my job because talking about nonsense all day is boring,” he said. “I talk about stuff that’s going on in my life or I’ll sit and listen to what they have to say. And I was about brought to tears from the Facebook post, reading all the comments from people I talk to every day and my regular customers saying how much they appreciate me.

“We literally have people telling us sometimes that they can’t wait till we’re out of a job, and we just feel like this job is pointless. And then seeing how much people appreciate what we do, and just the relationships you can build with somebody even talking to them for two minutes a day, a couple of times a week — it’s just amazing.”

Food banks: Pandemic doesn’t discriminate

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people who were utilizing the food bank for the first time.

Demand dropped to a more sustainable level once stimulus checks started to arrive and people figured out how to access state unemployment benefits — a difficult process as more than 92,000 Oregonians filed claims for unemployment insurance benefits during a week in late March alone.

Despite closures and virus-related precautions, visitors still flocked to Seaside and the North Coast. Shops and restaurants reopened but operated under scaled-back models. While the business returned, many jobs did not.

When Brown announced the two-week freeze, numbers at the South County Food Bank jumped again. They served 112 people in one day. During a recent Tuesday distribution, they had already hit 90 people served by mid-afternoon.

Local food bank and pantry operators believe federal aid packages that included stimulus checks helped keep demand down to some extent through the summer and early fall. Casterline attributes the jump in people seeking out food assistance now to uncertainty about federal and state aid.

“The money has evaporated and they’re back and I’m glad we’re here to serve them,” she said.



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian
Kirsten Bergethon adds bars of soap to the food boxes.

Residents and businesses have been generous in their donations to pantries and food banks, volunteers say. But looking ahead to what will likely be a difficult winter, they are stockpiling key items like canned soup and trying to think of ways to preserve other food that they may have in sudden abundance.

“We are squirrels by nature,” Casterline said. “A lot of the product that we get has a finite amount of time it can be on the shelf. The worst is throwing away the food.”

On distribution days, she will see people she recognizes from church or from around town, servers from local restaurants, people who have never had to ask for food assistance before, people who are used to taking care of themselves. Employees

who have had to lay off employees sometimes reach out to Casterline and other board members to make sure there are resources available for these employees at the food bank.

Many of the people the food bank serves often lack support networks and are short on other resources that might provide some buffer during tough times.

“So when anything happens, instead of it being something where you figure out what you have to handle and what changes you have to make, it’s a catastrophe,” Casterline said. “They are dealing with a high level of uncertainty and anxiety, and it’s not misplaced on people’s parts.”

An ever-shifting landscape

Before the coronavirus, volunteers at the food bank used to ask people for an esti-

Sign: Council will review updated language Dec. 7

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A community group known as the “Fort Astoria Defenders” erected the beaverboard sign at 15th and Exchange streets in 1948 to detail the historic trading post. Green lines on the streets and sidewalks around the city block mark the fort’s location.

Weather deteriorated the sign over the years, causing safety concerns. A year ago, the city’s Historic Landmarks Commission approved replacing the deteriorating sign with high-density plastic to ease maintenance costs.

But the Lower Columbia Preservation Society, wanting a more historically accurate replacement, purchased the materials to create a new beaverboard sign. The city bought the new posts and hardware to mount the sign.

People in the community also raised concerns with the sign’s language. Mayor Bruce Jones convened a work group that included representatives from the Chinook



Edward Stratton/The Astorian

The old Fort Astoria sign is on display in the Clatsop County Heritage Museum as part of the ‘Signs of the Times’ exhibit.

Indian Nation, Clatsop-Nehalem Confederated Tribes, the preservation society, Clatsop County Historical Society, Columbia River Maritime Museum and Lewis and Clark National Historical Park.

John Goodenberger, a historic consultant for the city, said the mayor wanted a fresh look at the sign. “I think the issue is larger than updating language,” he said. “It’s trying

to create a recordation of history that includes more voices.”

Gone are references like John Jacob Astor’s desire “to dominate the areas explored by Lewis and Clark,” and “the Oregon country’s first white woman, the English barmaid, Jane Barnes.”

The new language focuses on how “the Lower Chinook and Clatsop people guided a vast network of trade from

mate of their yearly income. Now they don’t bother. With their lives and jobs in constant flux, few of the food bank’s newest visitors can provide a number with any certainty.

The ever-shifting landscape and the magnitude of people’s needs has been hard on food bank volunteers and employees, as well.

“This is when people need us the most and this is when leadership has to come through,” Martin said on the call with Bonamici. He also shared that his daughter, who is based with the U.S. military outside of the country, is recovering from her own bout with the virus.

Later, he further clarified his statement. The coronavirus pandemic doesn’t discriminate, he told The Astorian.

“Whether it is through illness, deaths of loved ones, job losses, side effects of school closures, etc. It has affected us all, and I shared my personal story to emphasize that,” he said. “Our volunteers and staff experience all of this, yet they come in and place themselves on the literal front lines of this pandemic, just like the millions of other essential workers in our great nation.

“How we manage this situation and overcome it matters,” he added. “Producing tangible results through this situation matters.”

the mouth of the Columbia River.” It acknowledges Astor’s competition with British interests in the region and his diverse workforce.

“Astor’s workforce included French Canadians, Hawaiians, African Americans, and Scots, many of whom adopted Chinook jargon to communicate with Native people,” the new language reads. “Encouraged by Chiefs Comcomly and Coboway, alliances were expanded through intermarriages between Lower Chinook and Clatsop women, and Astor’s employees.”

The old Fort Astoria sign was donated to the Clatsop County Heritage Museum for use as part of the “Signs of the Times” exhibit.

The City Council is scheduled to review the updated language for the sign on Dec. 7, said Jonah Dart-McLean, the city’s parks director.

“We’re not sure when the new sign will be hung up,” he said. “It’ll depend on how long it takes to get built.”

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