

IN BRIEF

Pacific County unemployment drops

OLYMPIA, Wash. — Good news has been sparse as of late, but Pacific County received some last week with the release of the latest employment update.

The county's unemployment rate dropped for a third consecutive month in October to 8.1%, according to a monthly update from the Washington State Employment Security Department. The rate is down from 10.7% in September and a pandemic high of 17.1% in May.

Along with neighboring Grays Harbor, however, Pacific County continues to have one of the highest unemployment rates in the state, with the statewide unemployment rate dropping to 6%.

— *Chinook Observer*

Union coalition backs Kalama methanol plant

LONGVIEW, Wash. — A coalition of about 25 national and international unions wants Washington state officials to approve plans for a \$2 billion methanol refinery in Kalama.

In a letter to Gov. Jay Inslee, North America's Building Trades Unions wrote: "As you know, we have worked diligently to identify and support 'blue/green' projects that create family wage union jobs and also help fight climate change.

"We believe the (Northwest Innovation Works) project represents one of these opportunities."

The letter was sent a few days ahead of a federal court ruling that vacated federal permits for the plant and sent the plans back to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for another environmental review, the Columbian reported.

Conservation organizations, including Columbia Riverkeeper, have staunchly opposed the plant since it was first proposed in 2014. Those groups have filed multiple lawsuits against the plant, including a case that led to the federal court decision last week.

The building trades letter said that it was writing on "behalf of the nearly 80,000 members of the Washington State Building and Construction Trades Council, the broader labor community and their families."

Northwest Innovation Works wants to build a \$2 billion methanol plant on leased land at the Port of Kalama. Company officials say the facility would employ 200 people to convert natural gas into methanol for use in plastic manufacturing in China.

A recent draft environmental study completed by the state Department of Ecology suggested that the plant would increase global greenhouse gas emissions, but likely at a lesser rate than if the plant is not built and market demands for methanol are met by other sources.

— *Associated Press*

US House votes to legalize cannabis

U.S. House Democrats passed a bill to legalize cannabis on a federal level Friday. It's the first time either chamber of Congress has voted on the matter.

The MORE Act, or the Marijuana Opportunity, Reinvestment, and Expungement Act, says cannabis should no longer be considered a Schedule I drug, along with the likes of heroin and ecstasy.

The act requires cannabis convictions be reassessed, that the government invest in services for people caught in the "War on Drugs," and it allows cannabis companies to get funding through the Small Business Administration.

The act also imposes a 5% tax on cannabis, and directs the Government Accountability Office to study the societal impact of legalization.

"We're here because we have failed three generations of Black and Brown young people, whose lives can be ruined, or lost, by selective enforcement of these laws," said U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer, an Oregon Democrat and co-chair of the Congressional Cannabis Caucus. "This legislation will end that disaster."

— *Oregon Public Broadcasting*

DEATHS

Dec. 3, 2020

SLOTTE, Ronald Wesley, 76, of Seaside, died in Wheeler. Ocean View Funeral & Cremation Service of Astoria is in charge of the

arrangements.

Nov. 29, 2020

McEWAN, Patricia, 93, of Seaside, died in Seaside. Hughes-Ransom Mortuary is in charge of the arrangements.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

MONDAY

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

TUESDAY

Clatsop Care Health District Board, 5 p.m., (electronic meeting).

Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District, 5:15 p.m., special meeting, (electronic meeting).

Lewis & Clark Fire Department Board, 6 p.m., main fire station, 34571 U.S. Highway 101 Business.

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

Warren named to Gearhart City Council

By R.J. MARX
The Astorian

GEARHART — Mayor Paulina Cockrum's first act after taking the oath of office at Wednesday's City Council meeting was appointing Brent Warren to fill her open council seat.

Warren worked for Bank of America, Key Bank and Banner Bank, serving as a vice president of community development in Portland for 33 years before his move to Gearhart.

His responsibilities included home mortgage lending for first-time home buyers, small business lending, low income housing tax credit investments, community facility financing and coordinating federal Community Reinvestment Act examinations. He has served on nonprofit boards, including Portland Habitat for Humanity, Portland Housing Center, Habitat for Humanity of Oregon and was asked to serve on Portland's Fair Contracting Forum. He received the



Brent Warren has been appointed to fill City Councilor Paulina Cockrum's Position 3 seat on the Gearhart City Council. Cockrum ran unopposed for mayor and took the oath of office at Wednesday's City Council meeting.

Mayor Vera Katz Volunteer Award.

Warren retired in 2015 and moved with his wife to the northwest coast of Costa Rica.

After three years experiencing the country's culture, geography and language, they decided to return to the U.S.

They relocated to Gearhart because it checked the most boxes, Warren said after the meeting.

"We were impressed with how Gearhart had recognized the negative impact short-term rentals have on community life and the long-term rental market," he said.

Since becoming a Gearhart resident, Warren has served on the budget committee and small business committee. He created a Facebook group, Gearhart Nice Neighbors, where, he said, "the only requirements to join are a connection to Gearhart and a promise to be nice."

Warren's nomination was endorsed unanimously by the council at Wednesday's meeting.

"It's good to be among such a good group of folks," Warren said. "I've admired your work for three years."

Cockrum, who represented Position 3, ran unopposed for mayor after Mayor Matt Brown announced he

would not seek reelection.

Along with Cockrum, councilors Reita Fackerell and Dan Jesse each took the oath of office from their homes during the electronic meeting. Jesse won reelection for Position 4 and Fackerell for the Position 2 seat.

Smith was named interim council president until the new year.

"Thank you Reita, Paulina and Dan," City Administrator Chad Sweet said. "We appreciate your volunteerism."

The terms of planning commissioners also came up for reappointment. Commissioners David Smith and Carl Anderson each sought to rejoin the Planning Commission for another four-year term.

Three additional applicants, Julie Nichols, Bob Shortman and Curt Penrod also sought to fill the vacant positions and participated in interviews.

Cockrum reappointed Smith and Anderson to the seven-member commission.

Gearhart city councilor aims to prevent public drunkenness

Zone amendments pushed to new year

By R.J. MARX
The Astorian

GEARHART — Working in the commercial zoning amendment permitting to-go alcohol sales at neighborhood cafes delayed approval of a long-discussed update to the city's downtown zoning code.

"I don't want my children to see people staggering out of a bar," City Councilor Kerry Smith said.

Smith was referring to lan-

guage in the amendments that would allow take-out alcohol sales by neighborhood cafes, the product of new language designed to clean up outdated code language, make downtown commercial zoning less restrictive and encourage new businesses.

"Neighborhood cafes are defined as a business devoted primarily to the serving of prepared food where food is consumed while customers are seated at tables and having no more than 1,300 square feet of eating area," the amendment states. "Food and beverage may also be sold for takeout. Service may include

alcohol sales on premise or to-go, where licensed by OLCC (Oregon Liquor Control Commission)."

If the amendments are approved as written, Gearhart could open the door for takeout alcohol sales and subsequent public displays of drunkenness, Smith said.

"I don't want that for Gearhart. If I have a legacy here, I don't want that to be part of what I leave behind," he said.

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.

City councilors voted to table the ordinance for one month while staff edits language.

As that portion of the code heads to review, Traci Williams, owner the Sweet Shop, asked for further review of the amendments overall.

"I wish you guys would just push pause and get it right," Williams said.

Tire dust kills coho returning to Puget Sound

By LYNDIA V. MAPES
Seattle Times

First they circle. Then they gasp at the surface of the water. Soon they can't swim. Then they die.

For decades now, scientists have known something was killing beautiful, adult coho salmon as soon as they hit Seattle's urban waters, ready to spawn. They had escaped the orcas, the fishermen, traveled thousands of miles, only to be mysteriously killed as soon as they finally reached home.

In a breakthrough paper published in Thursday's issue of *Science*, a team of researchers revealed the culprit behind the deaths of coho in an estimated 40% of the Puget Sound area — a killer so lethal it takes out 40% to 90% of returning coho to some urban streams before they spawn. It is a killer hidden in plain sight.

Tires. More specifically, a single chemical, 6PPD-quinone, derived from a preservative that helps tires last longer.

Through painstaking analysis and building on years of prior research, the team, including researchers from the Center for Urban Waters in Tacoma, the University of Washington and Washington State University, isolated the killer from a witch's brew of some 2,000 chemicals in roadway runoff.

The chemical is a globally common tire rubber antioxidant. But when it does its



Mark Stone/University of Washington

Zhenyu Tian, a research scientist at the Center for Urban Waters at the University of Washington Tacoma, holds a sampling pole, which is used to collect creek water for future tests.

job, interacting with ozone in the atmosphere, the chemical transforms to a substance that is highly toxic to coho.

Bound up in the rubber, this chemical taints tire-wear particles shed by tires onto roads. The tire dust is in roadway runoff that seeps, trickles and pours into water bodies, including urban streams, every time it rains. The more traffic on the road, the higher the dose.

Coho salmon, returning with the first fall rains, take the hit. They usually die within hours.

The pollutant is particularly problematic for waters near busy roads. Translation: most of central Puget Sound and its sprawl. Ironically,

the millions of dollars spent to make these areas more salmon friendly and boost fish populations have created ecological traps for coho coming back to toxic waters.

Some of the scientists who published the paper were both exhilarated at the breakthrough and concerned by the findings.

"I find it incredibly sad to watch the adults when they are sick," said co-senior author of the paper, Edward Kolodziej, an associate professor in both the University of Washington Tacoma Division of Sciences & Mathematics and the university's Department of Civil & Environmental Engineering.

Every fall he'd make a visit to Longfellow Creek in west Seattle and mourn what he saw.

"When you see a fish in the field, and know something is happening that is not understood, you just have to take that very seriously. ... It was just so evident to everyone we were working on a real problem."

It was the cross-disciplinary approach of bringing together experts in the biology and chemistry of the problem that finally cracked the mystery. Dogged determination helped, too.

Lead author Zhenyu Tian, a research scientist at the Center for Urban Waters at

the University of Washington Tacoma, said there were times when he wondered if they would ever figure out just what chemical was the killer.

He finally had the idea it might be not the tire itself but something related to it — and hit on the preservative. They figured out that the preservative, 6PPD, goes through an environmental transformation that turns it into 6PPD-quinone — a coho killer.

"This is the smoking gun. You go through all the lines of evidence and it lines up," he said.

Tian modestly makes it sound easier than it was, Kolodziej said. "It looks so nice and tidy in the paper. They went above and beyond," he said of Tian and Jenifer McIntyre, an assistant professor at Washington State's School of the Environment.

"If you are a scientist, you are among the people most familiar with failure; you have to be so comfortable with not succeeding," Kolodziej said. After all, most research is a product of figuring out what doesn't work, what doesn't answer the question pursued, Kolodziej said. "It is slow and difficult and positive reinforcement is rare," he said of scientific research. "You have to trust the scientific process. You put in the work, like so many things in life, it is about putting in the work."

It has taken decades to solve this problem, noted McIntyre, who is based in Puyallup and is among scientists who have been sleuthing out the coho killer for years.

Nat Scholz of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Northwest Fisheries Science Center in Seattle was the lead author in a 2011 paper with McIntyre and other authors that showed that coho spawning mortality was routine in urban streams. They joined with other scientists who documented that bio-filtration through soil solves the problem, purifying the water.

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