

County reports new virus cases

The Astorian

Clatsop County on Thursday reported six new coronavirus cases. The cases include two women in their 20s, a man in his 60s, a woman in her 60s and a man in his 70s living in the northern part of the county. A man in his 30s living in the southern part of the county also tested positive.

One of the people was hospitalized for a condition unrelated to the virus, according to the county. The others were recovering at home. The county has recorded 400 virus cases since March. According to the county, 302 have recovered, five have been hospitalized and one has died. The others are recovering at home.

Oregon reaches new record of daily virus cases

By SARA CLINE
Associated Press
and Report for America

SALEM — As Oregon reached a new record number for reported daily COVID-19 cases and deaths Friday, lawmakers, advocates and others called on Gov. Kate Brown to declare a special legislative session. The Oregon Health Authority reported 2,176 new COVID-19 cases and 30 deaths. The previous daily records had been 1,699 cases and 24 deaths. The state has recorded 81,437 cases and 1,003 deaths statewide during the pandemic. “I know it is hard to imagine, but the hardest days are still ahead,” Brown said. While health officials delivered the grim message that Oregon has surpassed 80,000 cases since the start of the pandemic, tenants are asking for the Legislature to act on a proposed eviction moratorium and setup a Landlord Compensation Fund. The eviction moratorium, which was ordered at the beginning of the pandemic, is scheduled to lapse on Dec. 31. In Multnomah County, Oregon’s most populous county, the moratorium is set to expire on Jan. 8. “As COVID-19 continues to rage across the state and the end of the statewide eviction moratorium looms, the statewide eviction moratorium has been successful keeping people safe and in their homes,” said Patty

Wentz, a spokeswoman for Stable Homes for Oregon Families. “But as expiration of the moratorium looms over the holidays, Oregonians are calling for a special session to extend the moratorium and provide rental assistance before it’s too late.” The proposed extension would allow for renters impacted financially by the pandemic to be exempt from eviction and rent payments until July 1. Renters who don’t qualify for the eviction protections past Dec. 31 would still have until March 31 to pay off back rent. They would be responsible for paying the current rent as of Jan. 1. In order for renters to receive this immunity they would be required to submit a sworn statement that they experienced financial hardship — including medical bills, loss of income and increased child care or elder care responsibilities and costs during the pandemic. In addition, the proposal could help landlords as it would allocate \$100 million from the state’s general fund to assist renters and landlords. Lawmakers say it’s likely that the bulk of that money would go into a new Landlord Compensation Fund to assist property owners who are owed rent. State House Speaker Tina Kotek, a Portland Democrat, has also called for a December special session. During Friday’s press conference, Brown said

she was meeting with lawmakers to discuss solutions, tools and resources to help Oregonians with meeting health care, housing and business needs. The governor said she is hopeful that there will be more information on a possible special session in the next few days. “I am looking forward to coming up with a solution that will address these needs and that can be addressed in a special session sometime in the next several weeks,” Brown said. Brown also described plans Friday to prioritize who will get the first doses of COVID-19 vaccine and how they will be distributed. The governor laid out previously released plans for the first shipments, 107,000 initial doses from drugmakers Pfizer and Moderna, to arrive in mid-December. She said an additional 40,950 doses from Pfizer are expected to be delivered to Oregon on Dec. 22. While the news of the vaccine doses to protect health workers — those who will be first to be immunized against COVID-19 — offered a glimmer of hope, the governor emphasized that it will take time and continued diligence to continue to slow the spread until all Oregonians have been able to get vaccinated. “We can see the light at the end of the tunnel but we are not there yet,” Brown said. Erin Ross of Oregon Public Broadcasting contributed to this report.

Recount: Hilton could be sworn in on Jan. 4

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in 2019 after Bruce Jones was elected mayor. The ward covers Uppertown east to Alderbrook and Tongue Point. West chose not to run for a four-year term, citing work obligations. Joshua Conklin, a service sector worker, trailed in third in the race with 25% of the vote. Heather Kelez and Brook Boden dropped out of the race too late to be taken off the ballot and received more than 15%. City Manager Brett Estes said the city has not heard from Morley about her plans. The next step after the election would be preparing

Hilton to be a city councilor starting in January, Estes said. The process includes training on issues such as land use, meeting with department heads and information about what efforts the city is working on. Hilton would be sworn in at the City Council meeting on Jan. 4. Hilton traces his family roots in Astoria to the 1880s and cast himself as the native Astorian in the race. He attended Clatsop Community College and Portland State University. He runs Hanthorn Crab Co., a wholesale seafood buyer, and Pier 39 Seafoods, a delicatessen. A commercial fisherman and

casual longshoreman, he has also contributed to the FisherPoets Gathering. Morley, who relocated to Astoria five years ago from Portland, helped with a petition to save Birch Field in Alderbrook and co-founded Friends of Birch Field and Park, a group taking on maintenance of the property for the city. City Councilor Tom Brownson defeated challenger Floyd Holcom, the owner of Pier 39, in Ward 2, which covers the South Slope, parts of Uniontown and most of the Port of Astoria’s central waterfront. Brownson had 54% to Holcom’s 45%.



The Northwest Oregon Housing Authority has a waiting list for vouchers.

Housing: Program assists about a thousand households in three counties

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board meeting Thursday. Henry Heimuller, a Columbia County commissioner who serves on the board, said the waiting list could be artificially high since the list has not been purged or updated. Seventy-seven percent of the applicants on the waiting list were described as extremely low income, which is defined as having an income less than or equal to 30% of the area median income. Sixty-one percent are elderly or near elderly, about 13% are disabled and about 12% have children. The housing authority estimates the average wait time for the voucher program is between two and three years. “Even as the money issues settles out and this funding year goes on and we get renewed at what we have — we’re not seeing a lot of turnover, and the only way that we can really issue new vouchers is when people leave the program and when we have turnover,” Evans said. “So we have enough people right now to support our needs for the next 10 years. So the people that are applying right now are a

long way away from getting assistance. “What a lot of agencies do — and we’re not in a place right now to advocate one way or the other for this — but what a lot of agencies do is when they get to that five to 10 years out of range, they will close their waiting

three or more people in it — about 150 to 200 people — that would be in that group of people that we want to try to do the family self-sufficiency program with and move toward independence and self-sufficiency,” Evans said. “So there’s not going to be a lot of movement, sadly.” The housing choice voucher program assists about a thousand households in the three counties, according to the housing authority. More than half are people with no children. Less than half are people who are elderly or disabled or both. Most are on fixed incomes like Social Security and Supplemental Security Income. More than 80% have household gross income of less than \$20,000. Evans is serving as the housing authority’s interim director under an emergency resolution after Todd Johnston resigned. He is a director at Quadel, a Washington, D.C., based management and consulting firm the housing authority hired to manage the housing choice voucher program. The board is conducting a search for an interim director who can serve until a permanent executive director is hired.

THE HOUSING AUTHORITY ESTIMATES THE AVERAGE WAIT TIME FOR THE VOUCHER PROGRAM IS BETWEEN TWO AND THREE YEARS.

list so that you’re not giving somebody a false hope that they’re going to be able to get assistance any time soon.” Because most people in the voucher program are on fixed incomes, Evans said, the way they often leave is to move into assisted living, nursing homes or die. “For families that have

Call 503-325-2203 For Info

Old fashioned Christmas in the Flavel House Museum

The air is cold, the leaves have fallen, and the Flavel House is decorated for Christmas...traditionally, a night with Santa would be right around the corner, but this year, to keep Santa safe and healthy for his annual journey, we are doing things differently. The elves have delivered a mailbox located on the front porch of the Flavel House. Children are invited to drop their letter to Santa in the box between now and December 18th. Then, return to visit the museum any day between December 19th and 23rd to pick up a special personalized stocking gift from the big man himself. Merry Christmas and Stay Santa Safe.

For more information about this event or other Clatsop County Historical Society activities, please call 503-325-2203 or e-mail: info@astoriamuseums.org

Our friends at Providence Seaside Hospital along with Kent and LJ Easom have helped us Stay Santa Safe by making this event possible.



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