

OPINION



the Astorian

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Founded in 1873

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PUBLISHER’S NOTEBOOK

Print or digital — local news isn’t free

Every business has a 2020 story. The Astorian’s reads a lot like others who have made changes in response to the impact of coronavirus restrictions. A downturn in revenue meant that in March we laid off employees, reduced hours, sent people home to work remotely and applied for a Paycheck Protection Program loan to cover lost revenue.



What happened then was a renewal in our conviction that local news is essential — and appreciated. Our operations improved as we focused remaining resources on keeping our employees healthy, our community informed and taking care of our customers.

We received donations and support from subscribers and community members who recognized that credible, relevant local news is vital to an informed community, and there is a cost to produce it well.

From March to December of this year, subscriptions to The Astorian grew significantly, particularly digital subscriptions. Over half of our print subscribers are now registered to use our digital editions and apps, and 16% of our subscribers are digital only.

I’m tired of people parroting the narrative that the newspaper industry is dying. It isn’t. But it’s definitely changing. In many ways, we were fortunate that the events of 2020 moved those changes forward faster.

Today we really describe ourselves as a news organization, not a newspaper. Our content is posted online every day and at all hours, including video and spoken formats. Much effort is spent providing feedback to our news team on which content resonates with readers and how they find it, whether through newsletter, social media or search.

Subscriptions pay for the cost of producing the news, and we are focused on giving our subscribers their money’s worth.

We do allow all dailyastorian.com readers four stories a month without paying. During the beginning of the pandemic,



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

The Astorian tells the stories of the North Coast in words and images.

IF YOU ARE A SUBSCRIBER, THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT. AS ALWAYS, I’M INTERESTED IN HEARING MORE ABOUT WHAT YOU WANT TO SEE IN YOUR ASTORIAN — PRINT OR DIGITAL.

our coronavirus coverage was outside of the subscription pay-wall so that critical public health and safety information was available to everyone. However, in December, we made the decision to put that section behind the paywall again, since the old stories belong in our archive of uniquely created local news. Archives are a privilege for subscribers.

Going forward, most of our reporting will be behind the pay-wall. We will make exceptions, like we always have done, for stories that involve imminent potential threats to public health and safety.

The other recent change to dailyastorian.com is that reader commenting is no longer a feature on our website. We are interested in hearing from readers, but we’ve found the best story feedback comes from direct interaction with news reporters, whose contact information is on every story.

There are new additions to dailyastorian.com, too. Daily interactive sudoku, crossword and word jumble puzzles are now online for subscribers at dailyastorian.com/puzzles. You can also listen to any story posted online, in English, Spanish, French, German, Chinese or Italian.

Timely digital products are important to our future, but that doesn’t mean The Astorian print edition will go away anytime soon. As of today, over 7,000 readers still want to read a print newspaper, and about 40% of those still don’t access the digital version. You’ll continue to see compelling features geared for our print audience, like Thursday’s 2020 review section of the community’s response to the pandemic.

Our mission remains to produce credible, trusted local news and information for our community. Our goal is to continually add more value to The Astorian subscription — in print or online.

If you are a subscriber, thank you for your support. As always, I’m interested in hearing more about what you want to see in your Astorian — print or digital.

Contact me at kborgen@dailyastorian.com or at 503-325-4955.

Kari Borgen is publisher of The Astorian.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Masterful job

The issue of forest fire management and forestry practices was the topic of two recent opinion pieces in The Astorian. “Fanning the flames” was a guest column in the Dec. 22 issue. It was a direct response to the editorial “Prioritize forest management” from Dec. 17.

I encourage anyone who has an interest in this topic, and who may have missed these pieces, to go back and look them up. In “Fanning the flames,” contributor George Sexton does a masterful job of explaining the underpinnings of this past summer’s devastating wildfires in Oregon.

He also points us in the direction of what actions we must take to address these problems going forward. Forestry and wildland fire management must be adapted to a world in which the climate is warming. Sexton’s guest column paints a vivid picture of that world we are now entering.

ERIC HALPERIN
Gearhart

Keep your ear to the tracks

Sometime over the holiday weekend there was a theft at the Astoria Riverfront Trolley barn of train rails, joint bars and tie plates, which were stored outside the barn. These parts are critical for our track repair process, and more than just rusty steel.

The Astoria Riverfront Trolley is a non-profit that has been without funds for this past year, as have many other organizations. To replace these stolen items will be costly.

Of course, if you thought these were just scrap and were set aside as garbage ... we would gladly take all the items back. These items are quite heavy, and took the strength of more than one to move. Thanks for leaving the empty pallets, by the way. This year our only income has come



from selling souvenirs, some of which are cut pieces of rail for bookends, and trivets made from spikes. And thank you to all who have purchased them, also for donations, that are extremely appreciated. Our stack of “next in line” pieces to

be cut has been stolen, yet we will continue on. This has been a challenging year for everybody, we all understand that, but please refrain from taking something that isn’t yours. It’s volunteers who operate this iconic

part of the Astoria experience, and all of us, as operators, are anxious to get rolling down the tracks as soon as we can do it safely.

PAT WILSON
Astoria