

IN BRIEF

Pacific County reports three new virus deaths

LONG BEACH, Wash. — The coronavirus pandemic continues to take its toll locally, as Pacific County's death count nearly doubled just a few days into the new year.

The Pacific County Health and Human Services Department announced Monday that three more county residents have died due to complications of COVID-19, raising the overall count to seven deaths attributed to the county since the pandemic began.

"Our deepest sympathies go out to the family and friends of these individuals during this time of loss. Our thoughts and prayers are with them," Pacific County Health Officer Dr. Steven Krager said in a statement.

— *Chinook Observer*

Oregon struggles with vaccine rollout

State health care officials acknowledged on Tuesday that Oregon's COVID-19 vaccination rollout has been plagued with problems — something the state is scrambling to fix.

The vaccine rollout proved to be more complex than past flu vaccination and mass vaccination events, said Oregon Health Authority Chief Medical Officer Dana Hargunani.

This rollout "imposes operational complexities that we are continuing to address," Hargunani said.

The announcement came a day after Gov. Kate Brown asked the agency to ramp up capacity. By the end of two weeks, she wants 12,000 people a day to be vaccinated against the coronavirus in Oregon.

The health authority planned to vaccinate 100,000 health care workers by the end of 2020. Six days into the new year, it's just halfway to that goal.

— *Oregon Public Broadcasting*

New county commissioners and sheriff sworn in

Courtney Bangs and John Toyooka were sworn in Tuesday as Clatsop County commissioners.

Bangs, a Knappa preschool teacher, represents District 4, which covers eastern Astoria to Westport. She defeated Kathleen Sullivan in the May election.

Toyooka, a manager at Lum's Auto Center, represents District 2, which includes Gearhart, Clatsop Plains and portions of Seaside and Warrenton. He defeated Sarah Nebeker in May.

Sheriff Matt Phillips was sworn in on Monday at the Clatsop County Courthouse.

Phillips has served as interim sheriff since January 2020. He was unopposed for election.

County seeking applications for comprehensive plan committees

Clatsop County is seeking applications for comprehensive plan update advisory committees.

The county is looking for representatives from Lewis and Clark Olney Wallooskee, Elsie-Jewell, Seaside Rural, Northeast, Southwest Coastal and Clatsop Plains planning areas to provide recommendations to staff updating the county's six community plans and the comprehensive plan.

The comprehensive plan is a long-term land use vision for the unincorporated areas of the county and sets planning policies that guide the county's actions.

This is the first update since the county adopted its comprehensive plan in 1979.

The six Planning Area Citizen Advisory Committees will meet monthly until the county Board of Commissioners adopt the plan in 2023.

People can apply on the county's website or at the county manager's office at 800 Exchange St., Suite 410 in Astoria. The deadline to apply is 4 p.m. on Feb. 12.

— *The Astorian*

DEATHS

Jan. 2, 2021

TYMKOWICZ, Jana Lynn, 36, of Warrenton, died in Astoria. Caldwell's Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

Dec. 31, 2020

DANKS, Jeffrey Mason, 61, of Warrenton, died in Warrenton. Caldwell's Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

ON THE RECORD

Theft

• Jacob Wieckowski, 36, of Seaside, was arrested Tuesday at Walmart in Warrenton for theft in the second degree.

• Lacey Meneguzzi, 25, of Astoria, was arrested Monday at Walmart in

Warrenton for theft in the second degree.

Criminal trespass

• John Marshall Lancaster, 60, of Astoria, was arrested Monday on W. Marine Drive in Astoria for criminal trespass in the second degree.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

THURSDAY

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

Cannon Beach City Council, 5:30 p.m., work session, (electronic meeting).

the Astorian

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TOP: Astoria Fire Chief Dan Crutchfield receives the vaccine to prevent the coronavirus at the Astoria Armory on Tuesday.

RIGHT: Pharmacist Ben Ren gives Astoria Police Chief Geoff Spalding the vaccine to prevent the coronavirus.

Photos by Hailey Hoffman/
The Astorian



Schools vary in return to classrooms

By **KATIE FRANKOWICZ**
The Astorian

Clatsop County school districts have gone in several different directions since Gov. Kate Brown eased state restrictions on when and how students return to classrooms.

Ahead of schools' winter break, the governor announced state guidelines for returning to school — such as the local number of positive coronavirus cases — would be "advisory rather than mandatory," leaving the decision up to individual districts and schools.

Like many counties across Oregon, Clatsop County has been classified as either high risk or extreme risk since the end of November due to the number and rate of positive cases. While some school districts have begun to shift their operations to take advantage of the new flexibility offered by the state, most are still considering what they will do.

District administrators said they had expected a shift in how schools would be allowed to reopen to students, but the timing of Brown's decision right before winter break caught many off guard.

The Astoria School District, which has started to plan for a gradual reopening later this month and in February, expects to discuss the shift in guidelines at a board meeting this month. For now, the district is continuing with nearly all students in online classrooms.

The Seaside School Dis-



Schools hope to return to in-person classes.

trict's board had voted ahead of Brown's announcement to continue with distance learning across all grades until Feb. 1.

"At that time, our leadership team will review the case counts in Clatsop County in hopes of seeing a trend in declining cases," Superintendent Susan Penrod said in an email to The Astorian at the end of December. "At this time we are still following this plan."

In the the Knappa School District, some students returned to classrooms for the first time this school year following winter break.

In a letter to the community posted on the district's website, however, Bill Fritz, the superintendent, announced that four employees were in quarantine over the virus.

Three had been exposed to the virus over the break but were showing no symptoms. One nonteaching staff member had tested positive

and had symptoms but was "faring OK," according to Fritz.

"We are able to operate with these people on leave," he wrote.

He noted that county metrics showed an increase in positive cases over the prior week. But for now, the district has opted to allow the youngest grades in classrooms five days a week. Fourth-through-eighth graders are in class for less time and are still operating with distance learning. Higher grades are under a hybrid instruction model.

The Warrenton-Hammond School District allowed some of its students to return at least on a limited basis to classrooms ahead of the governor's announcement, but now hopes to begin expanding in-classroom options beginning next week for some lower grade levels.

In a video posted to the grade school's Facebook

page, principal Rod Heyen announced the school would be adding an extra day of in-person instruction for kindergarten-through-third grade students. These students will now attend school five days a week.

The district hopes to phase in grades four through five under a hybrid model that combines online and in-person classes beginning next week. Many of these students were already going to classrooms on a very limited basis. What a return to school will look like for the higher grades is not clear yet, Superintendent Tom Rogozinski said.

The Jewell School District is one of the few in the county that because of its size and location was able to open fully to students at the start of the school year. Now, despite the easing of restrictions by the state, it is operating entirely under a distance learning model.

A middle school student tested positive for the coronavirus in early December. The district announced some cohorts in two grade levels would pivot to distance learning as a precaution.

But after attendance dropped dramatically following the announcement, the school, in consultation with the state and local public health officials, decided to move all students into distance learning.

Ahead of the New Year's holiday, Jon Wood, the principal at Jewell School, announced that the school would continue with distance learning through Jan. 18.

Highway 30 restricted to one lane after slide

By **NICOLE BALES**
The Astorian

U.S. Highway 30 was restricted to one lane east of Astoria after a landslide closed the highway on Monday.

Lou Torres, a spokesman for Oregon Department of Transportation, said there is no estimate on when both lanes will reopen. He said crews could be working on the slide for most of the week.

"We appreciate everyone's patience as we work to make that area safer for travelers," Torres said in an email.

The landslide occurred at about 3:30 a.m. on Monday a few miles east of the city.

Torres said crews were able to do an initial cleanup just enough to open the road after about an hour.



DeWayne Harkless Sr.

Crews worked to clean up a rockslide.

"But when daylight came and we continued to work on the slide, we noticed that there was an area on the steep slope above that concerned us," he said. "So, we brought in ODOT geologists to assess the situation and

determine what to do next. We were concerned for the safety of the crew, and as well as travelers. We want to make sure it is as safe as possible when we open the road."

The Knappa Fire Dis-

trict responded to the slide area at about 7:30 a.m. after a pickup truck was stuck by debris. One person was in the vehicle and was taken to a hospital by ambulance.

Oregon Department of Transportation crews doing mitigation efforts and cleaning debris discovered that more extensive repairs were required and shut down the highway indefinitely by late morning.

Torres said the main contributing factor of the slide was heavy rain combined with the steep hillside.

"There was some logging that was done in the area a number of years ago but it is always difficult to say how much that contributed," Torres said. "The weather and geography are usually the main contributing factors to slides on the coast and in the Coast Range."