

IN BRIEF

County seeks applicants for budget committees

Clatsop County has openings on several local budget committees.

The Clatsop County Budget Committee has seats open for District 3, which covers the central Astoria region, and District 4, which covers the eastern Astoria region. The District 3 term runs until February 2024. The District 4 term runs through February 2022.

Two seats are also open on Road District 1 Budget Committee, two seats are open on the Westport Sewer Service District Budget Committee and three seats are open on the 4-H & Extension District Budget Committee.

The county Board of Commissioners makes the appointments. Applications will be accepted through Feb. 8. More information is available on the county's website.

Warrenton Library hosts interest session

The Warrenton Community Library is holding a virtual group interest session at 6 p.m. on Thursday to discuss the creation of a Friends of Libraries organization.

The nonprofit groups support libraries in their communities. The groups generally handle finances and work closely with library management.

Anyone interested in getting involved can call the library at 503-861-8156 or visit the library's website to get information about the Zoom meeting.

Posalski sworn in to Seaside City Council

SEASIDE — David Posalski, a businessman, was sworn in on Monday to the Seaside City Council.

Posalski defeated Kathy Kleczek and Adam Wood in the November election in Ward 4.

Offices close for Martin Luther King Jr. Day

In observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day on Monday, all federal, state, county and city offices and services, including Astoria, Warrenton, Gearhart, Seaside and Cannon Beach city halls, are closed. All U.S. post offices are closed, and there is no mail delivery.

Astoria, Jewell, Knappa, Warrenton/Hammond and Seaside (including Cannon Beach and Gearhart) school district schools, and Clatsop Community College, are closed.

The Astoria Library, Seaside Library and Warrenton Library are closed.

The Port of Astoria offices and services are closed.

Garbage collection through Recology Western Oregon and the city of Warrenton garbage collection are not affected by the holiday. Recology Western Oregon's transfer station is open.

The Sunset Pool in Seaside is closed. The Astoria Aquatic Center is still closed.

The Clatsop County Heritage Museum and Flavel House are closed. The Oregon Film Museum and Carriage House — gift shops only — are open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The Uppertown Firefighters' Museum is closed for the winter.

Lil' Sprouts is open from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Fort Clatsop is closed, but the trails are open. The Columbia River Maritime Museum is closed. The Seaside Museum is closed.

Sunset Empire Transportation ("The Bus") is running.

— The Astorian

DEATHS

Jan. 11, 2021

CARR, Jeffrey Lee, 61, of Svensen, died in Svensen. Caldwell's Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

Dec. 12, 2020

ARMENT, George E., 87, of Clatskanie, died in Longview, Washington. Groulx Family Mortuary is in charge of the arrangements.

CORRECTION

Incorrect name — Ott Custer's body was found near Little Beach in Gearhart on Tuesday. His name was listed incorrectly as Custer Ott in an In Brief item on A2 on Thursday.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

TUESDAY

Warrenton City Commission, 4 p.m., work session, (electronic meeting).

Port of Astoria Commission, 4 p.m., (electronic meeting).

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

Seaside School District, 6 p.m., (electronic meeting).

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

the Astorian

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Edward Stratton/The Astorian

A geotechnical consultant for Astoria said several homes on Floral Street are at moderate risk of impact from a landslide Wednesday.



The Astorian

Record rainfall in January 1982 uprooted a house on Alameda Avenue and pushed it over the sidewalk, similar to another slide that occurred Wednesday.

Hillside off Alameda Avenue 'marginally stable'

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Astorian

A geotechnical consultant concluded there is no indication of larger-scale movement beyond the landslide that uprooted a house on Alameda Avenue on Wednesday, cautioning the city to monitor the hillside.

"The key findings there are that this slide was kind of a small slide within a much larger slide block. That whole hillside ... I consider it marginally stable," said Gerry Heslin, the vice president of Cornforth Consultants.

The slide that uprooted the home of Cati Foss was a surficial slough — or skin slide — involving about 3 to

6 feet of soil that slid off a steep, dipping bedrock face, Heslin said.

"I don't see any evidence right now of large-scale movement, although you've got to keep your eyes on it just to make sure that the initial conclusions are borne out by further observations," he said.

The slide left the backyards of several homes on Floral Street precariously close to the edge, including the deck of one home. Heslin warned that those homes were at moderate risk of being impacted by future sliding.

"But based on the site observations I made while I was out there, I think there's enough of what we call col-

luvium — the soil bedrock — to where that house ... should be fine," he said.

Cindy Moore, the assistant city engineer, said city staff has advised homeowners above the slide on Floral Street to cover the slide zone with tarps. Staff has marked cracks in a driveway between two homes.

"We're taking measurements daily, and those haven't changed since Wednesday afternoon," Moore said. "And then just visual inspections of the hillside."

Most hillsides in Astoria are at moderate to high risk of landslides. After record rainfall in January 1982, a home two lots east of Foss's home was similarly uprooted and pushed onto

the sidewalk.

Foss said her family is working with insurers and a contractor to determine whether her house, slumped over the sidewalk on Alameda Avenue, can be salvaged. But her family faces challenges in getting coverage for a landslide.

"If we had the insurance that was actually going to cover the slide itself, we'd need earthquake insurance or the equivalent of that," Foss said. "And because of our location in Astoria, it's like tens of thousands of dollars a year. I think the lowest quote they gave me was \$30,000 a year. It was insane. And the deductible was close to \$200,000 or \$300,000."

Kujala chosen as chairman of county commission

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

Commissioner Mark Kujala was selected Wednesday night as the new chairman of the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners, part of a shift in the ideological balance of the board in a more conservative direction.

Kujala, who was elected in 2018, represents District 1, which covers Warrenton, Hammond and the western portion of Astoria. He works as the director of the Columbia Memorial Hospital Foundation.

Kujala said the board's priorities this year will be guiding the county through the coronavirus pandemic and economic recovery.

"Our immediate goals really this year are pretty clear — continue to work on containing the spread of

COVID in the county, distribute the vaccine equitably and efficiently, focus on economic recovery for the busi-

nesses that have been hardest hit over these last 10 months," he said. "These are huge tasks. It's going to take a concerted, cooperative effort to achieve this. It's going to require resilience, teamwork and diligence."

"We'll continue to deliver the necessary public facilities and services effectively and efficiently and equitably. And we're going to do so in partnership with the public and private service sectors, just as our strategic plan and our mission outline."

The board has identified five focus areas in a strategic planning process: governance; infrastructure;

economic development; environmental quality and social services.

"But really, the function of public health this year and the economic recovery are really going to be predominant," Kujala said. "And I plan to focus my energies and my efforts to achieve successes in this."

The election of Courtney Bangs, a Knappa preschool teacher, and John Toyooka, a manager at Lum's Auto Center, moves the board to the political right.

Commissioner Lianne Thompson, who represents District 5, which covers most of South County, was chosen to serve as vice chair.

"Commissioner Kujala and I have both been eager to lead this board in years past,

and we haven't been shy about nominating ourselves," said Thompson, who was elected in 2014. "I'm still a hardworking, ambitious person because I want to do good and be good and help others do that. I think at this time, in this place with a COVID pandemic, it's appropriate for me to step back and ask the person who's working at a hospital in Astoria as being most ideally suited to lead us through this pandemic."

Commissioner Pamela Wev said she would like to see the board continue to rotate the chairmanship every year so every commissioner gets a chance.

"I certainly admire Commissioner Thompson's grace in this very unique situation," she said. "I think that having Commissioner Kujala on the front lines really is a great asset."

Trump administration slashes habitat for spotted owl

By BRADLEY W. PARKS
Oregon Public Broadcasting

The Trump administration has cut designated critical habitat for the northern spotted owl by millions of acres in Oregon, Washington state and California.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced Wednesday that it would remove 3.4 million acres of critical habitat for the bird, including all of what's known as the O&C Lands, which is big timber territory in western Oregon.

It's the latest jab at the northern spotted owl on President Donald Trump's way out the door.

The spotted owl is listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. The Fish and Wildlife Service has said the bird warrants uplisting to endangered because of continued population declines. The spotted owl population decreased approximately 3.8% annually rangewide from 1985 to 2013.

However, the agency refused to uplist the spotted owl at the end of last year, saying other species took higher priority. That decision is facing a legal challenge led by the Center for Biological Diversity.

Noah Greenwald, the center's endangered species



Don Ryan/AP Photo

A northern spotted owl flies after an elusive mouse jumping off the end of a stick in the Deschutes National Forest near Camp Sherman.

director, called the reduction of critical habitat a "parting shot" from the Trump administration.

"This is perhaps the nail in the coffin for the northern spotted owl," Greenwald said, "and really undoes a lot of the great work that's been accomplished under the Northwest Forest Plan."

The reclusive northern spotted owl became the face of a campaign to save Oregon's old growth forests from rampant logging in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The fight over the bird and the forests it inhabits was a watershed moment in Oregon history, shaping many

of the social, political, environmental and economic divisions present in the state today.

The Fish and Wildlife Service says slashing the owl's critical habitat satisfies a settlement agreement between the agency, the timber industry and counties. Half of all logging revenue from the O&C Lands — forests named for the long-defunct Oregon & California Railroad — goes to counties and schools, by law.

"We are delighted to see rational and positive decision-making by the federal government," said Tim Freeman, a Douglas County commissioner and president of the Association of O&C Counties, in a press release. "It has been a very long process, and there is still more to do. But this is a major step in the right direction."

The Fish and Wildlife

Service's original proposal to reduce critical habitat for the owl last August totaled just 200,000 acres. The acreage announced Wednesday is a dramatic departure from its initial proposal.

The agency also removed critical habitat designation on 20,000 acres of land recently transferred to the Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians and the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians.

The northern spotted owl still has more than 6 million acres of critical habitat.

Under the Endangered Species Act, federal land agencies must designate critical habitat that must be maintained for species survival. That can include areas that could sustain protected species even if they don't currently live there.

VOLUNTEER
PICK OF THE WEEK



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