

IN BRIEF

Astoria woman injured in crash on Highway 101 Business

An Astoria woman was injured Wednesday evening after a head-on collision on U.S. Highway 101 Business.

Police, who were called to the scene at about 7 p.m., say a man driving an Chevrolet Aveo was heading southbound when he did not follow the path of the roadway at a sharp curve and crossed the centerline into a Hyundai Sonata.

The people in the Aveo were not injured. A pregnant 23-year-old Astoria woman, who was a passenger in the Sonata, was injured and taken to Columbia Memorial Hospital in Astoria. She was later flown to Oregon Health & Science University Hospital in Portland.

Police investigating break-ins at Astoria food carts

Police are investigating break-ins at the three food carts in front of Reach Break Brewing in Astoria.

Doors on the food carts were found pried open on Thursday morning. Some had personal property and money taken.

Anyone with information is asked to contact Officer Alex Whitney at awhitney@astoria.or.us or 503-325-4411.

New Seaside campus ready for students

SEASIDE — Seaside School District campus buildings are ready for in-person class instruction, project manager Jim Henry said at Tuesday's school board meeting.

Construction is mostly complete, waiting a "few punch list items" and a completion of exterior remediation to the eastern side of the building.

"We wish a ribbon was wrapped on top of the buildings, but we can have students in school," Henry said.

In December, members of the construction team continued work on exterior remediation, finishing replacement of 22,000 linear square feet of weather barrier after the first application failed to meet specifications.

Work on the west side of the high school and middle school is near completion with the removal of scaffolding and installation of metal panels, Henry said. On the east facade, masonry work remains. "We've been seeing good progress. All of the tests have been thumbs up," he said.

The work is expected to continue through February.

County offers surveys to help with vaccine rollout

Online surveys are available for anyone who wants to receive a coronavirus vaccine.

The Clatsop County vaccine task force will use the information submitted in the surveys to notify people when they are eligible to register for a vaccination event.

Visit the county's website to fill out a survey.

People can email the task force at covid19vaccine@clatsopoc.com with any questions.

As of Wednesday, the county has administered 2,087 vaccines.

County seeking volunteers for COVID-19 call center

Clatsop County is seeking volunteers for its coronavirus public information call center.

Volunteers will be asked to do several tasks, including test scheduling, answering questions and assisting people to make appointments for vaccination events.

Training will be provided. A criminal background verification is required.

Volunteer shifts are 1.5 to 2 hours from 9 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. The call center adheres to federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines, including mask-wearing at all times, social distancing and multiple cleanings of the workspace.

Visit the county's website to volunteer. For more information email hr@co.clatsop.or.us.

— *The Astorian*

DEATH

Jan. 18, 2021

CROW, Joe Luis, 26, of Aberdeen, Washington, formerly of Westport, Oregon, died in Spokane, Washington. Caldwell's Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

MONDAY

Jewell School District Board, 6 p.m., Jewell School Library, 83874 Highway 103.

Seaside City Council, 7 p.m., (electronic meeting).

TUESDAY

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

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

Seaside Airport Advisory Committee, 6 p.m., (electronic meeting).

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

the Astorian

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AN ASTORIA SUNRISE



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Sunrise at the Astoria Column on Wednesday morning.

Legislature cranks up 2021 session after two-day delay

By GARY WARNER
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — After a two-day delay caused by FBI reports of possible right-wing attacks on state capitols, the Oregon Legislature got down to the business of the 2021 session.

On Thursday, 12 committees kicked off with virtual hearings. About 46 House members held a 20-minute floor session to move along the first batches of bills onto the political conveyor belt of readings and assignment to committee.

State Rep. Ron Noble, R-McMinnville, gave what was officially the opening prayer, but was more a plea for cooperation amid the crises and chaos — with an "amen" at the end.

"We must figure out a way to climb out of the mire, and the time is now," Noble said. "Is it naive to think we can create a vision forward and people with differing options can engage without vilifying each other? Maybe. But I'm willing to try."

Noble said the alternative of remaining in the political mire would destroy families, communities, the state and nation.

A lot of trees died to churn out the 1,500 bills and resolutions submitted by House and Senate members for the 2021 session.

But Rep. Julie Fahey, D-Eugene, tweeted a simple truth: "Just because there's a bill about something, it doesn't mean 'the Legislature' or 'the Democrats' want to pass it. At this point, it means one legislator had an idea."

If history is a guide, recycle bins around the Capitol will fill up fast with much of the legislation. In normal years, about 20% of bills make it to the full House and Senate for consideration.

House Speaker Tina Kotek, D-Portland, and Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, are eager to cap the time lawmakers are in Salem and the hours staff in the Capitol have to work on preparing bills and support



Nathan Howard/Getty Images

The state increased security around the Capitol over concerns about right-wing protesters.

materials. That's a formula for an extra high attrition rate on legislation not fast-tracked from the beginning.

Along with the official crises in front of the Legislature, the House and Senate committee on redistricting will be closely watched. Every 10 years, the new census numbers are used to redraw 60 state House districts, 30 state Senate districts and five congressional districts.

Oregon could get a sixth congressional district. The final numbers on which redistricting decisions will be based won't be released until April 1.

If the Legislature cannot agree on the new district lines, the mapping of state legislative districts goes to Secretary of State Shemia Fagan, while congressional lines go to a federal panel. There are often court challenges. But the new boundaries will be in place for the 2022 elections.

Virus precautions

State political reporters recently held an online meeting with legislative leaders and Gov. Kate Brown to get a preview of politics and policy agendas for 2021.

The Capitol has been closed to the public since Brown declared a state of emergency in March as COVID-19 began its spread through Oregon. The Legislature has held three short special sessions to deal with emergency measures tied to the pandemic, wildfires and

police reform.

Senate Minority Leader Fred Girod, R-Stayton, said the regular session of the Legislature should not continue with the public only able to take part via online testimony.

"You do what you can to make it so that the public has a right to come in and testify," Girod said. "There are billions of dollars that are going to be spent."

Girod, 70, said he knew that with many older members and those with health issues, the Legislature included people who were in high-risk categories for serious illness and even death.

But he argued a year of Oregonians being limited to virtual involvement was not acceptable in a transparent democracy. Opening the Capitol in some form was "worth the risk."

Courtney sharply disagreed. "I am not willing to play God with this stuff," said Courtney, 77.

Nationwide, over 150 state lawmakers have become infected with COVID-19, according to the Ballotpedia political website, and seven have died.

Oregon's five short days of special sessions since March had avoided any infections. But the regular session would require many more gatherings in Salem. Reopening the Capitol would increase the viral exposure on each person inside.

"You may be willing to take the risk, but I am not,"

Courtney said.

Capitol security

Violent assaults on the Capitol on Dec. 21 and the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6 are driving an aggressive review of security in Salem.

Oregon is one of 20 states that does not require visitors to pass through metal detectors to enter the Capitol. It's one of 45 states that allow some form of open carry of firearms, including AR-15 semi-automatic rifles and other long guns. It's even one of about 20 states that allow the guns to be carried into the Capitol.

Senate Minority Leader Christine Drazan, R-Canby, said most protesters would say they carry the guns as an expression of their Second Amendment right to bear arms.

An incredulous House Majority Leader Barbara Smith Warner, D-Portland, vigorously disagreed. The recent attacks show that the presence of armed protesters has a different motivation: "It's to intimidate," she said.

All aspects of security are under review, but any changes would be announced in public in advance and any change to gun laws would likely require legislation.

Courtney lives in Salem, represents a Salem district and has worked in the Capitol since he was first elected to the Legislature in 1981.

Surveying the reality today — the Capitol shuttered for 10 months, the attack on the Legislature, concrete blocks placed in front of the entrance, lower outside windows shielded against future riots by plywood, yards of fencing and National Guard troops on the grounds — makes Courtney immensely sad.

"This is really a traumatic thing to have Oregon, which is the most open Capitol in the nation, about to become a fortress," he said. "I never thought I'd see that. It breaks my heart."

The Oregon Capital Bureau is a collaboration between EO Media Group and Pamplin Media Group.

Brown gives unusual State of the State address

By PETER WONG
Oregon Capital Bureau

Gov. Kate Brown gave an unusual State of the State talk, her next to last as Oregon's governor.

The virtual address Thursday wasn't unusual. It's become commonplace in the 10 months since the coronavirus pandemic swept through the world and health protocols call for social distancing.

Brown noted that Thursday was exactly one year ago, when the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention confirmed the first COVID-19 case in the United States, that she convened a state team to prepare for a potential outbreak. The gov-

ernor issued her first executive orders on the pandemic March 8.

What was unusual was that Brown invited four other speakers to join her virtually for 45 minutes to discuss her priorities of ending the pandemic and promoting vaccinations, recovering from the Labor Day wildfires and advancing racial equity.

They were:

- Dr. Antwon Chavis, a pediatrician at Oregon Health & Science University's Doernbecher Children's Hospital in Portland, who spoke about how the pandemic affected children and families.

- Chief Christiana Rainbow Plews of the Upper McKenzie Rural Fire Pro-

tection District, who directed efforts against the Holiday Farms fire even as her own home burned.

- Reyna Lopez of PCUN farmworkers union based in Woodburn and Paul Solomon of Sponsors Inc. of Eugene, both members of the governor's Racial Justice Council, which recommended steps toward racial equity that Brown included in her proposed 2021-23 budget.

Echoing the "Build Back Better" campaign theme of President Joe Biden, Brown said it was not enough for Oregon to recover from the pandemic, the resulting economic downturn and the wildfires.

"We must recognize that

going back to the 'way things were' will not move us forward," the Democrat said. "Every difficult turn of this past year has only proven this point, further exacerbating existing disparities ... The first step to creating opportunity is recognizing that racism is endemic to our systems, impacting every part of our culture and our economy. I am committed to ensuring that the world we build as we emerge from this last year is a more equitable one."

Brown has two years to go in her second term. She leaves office on Jan. 9, 2023.

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