

IN BRIEF

Gearhart looks to invest in parks

GEARHART — Which Gearhart parks do you frequent most?

What is the most common activity you participate in during your visits to Gearhart’s parks and trails?

Are there any issues, deficiencies or concerns with any of Gearhart’s existing parks or trails?

These are among questions Gearhart residents are asked to deliver their thoughts on for the future of city parks.

The city’s Parks Master Plan Citizens Advisory Committee sent out online and paper surveys to determine how improvements could better address the community’s needs and desires.

The committee, which convened in July, aims to look at the “planning horizon” for the next 20 years, with recognition that land use decisions can have consequences beyond that.

Masks and sanitizer available for businesses to help against virus

Masks, gloves, sanitizer and other personal protective equipment is available for free to any Clatsop County business that needs it.

Businesses can complete a survey by noon on Mondays and pick up the items at a chamber of commerce on Wednesdays.

Woman rescued from rising tide in Cannon Beach

A U.S. Coast Guard aircrew rescued a woman Saturday near Ecola State Park in Cannon Beach after she became surrounded by the rising tide.

The woman was stranded before being hoisted to land.

— *The Astorian*

Pacific County unemployment worst in Washington state

LONG BEACH, Wash. — New unemployment figures released by the Washington State Employment Security Department contained, predictably, bad news for Pacific County.

The monthly data, released Tuesday, pegged the county’s unemployment rate at 10.7% in December, up from 8.6% in November and the highest unemployment rate of any county in the state.

The county’s leisure and hospitality industry, a critical part of the Long Beach Peninsula economy, bore the overwhelming brunt of job losses in the county.

— *Chinook Observer*

DEATHS

Jan. 23, 2021

LaMARR, Duane Dwight, 82, of Drain, formerly of Astoria, died in Roseburg. Caldwell’s Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

Jan. 20, 2021

TAGGART, Charles Arthur, 80, of Seaside, died in Seaside. Caldwell’s Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

MEMORIAL

Friday, Jan. 29

BALDWIN, Carol Ann — Graveside service at 1 p.m., Ocean View Cemetery, 575 S.W. 18th St. in Warrenton. Baldwin, 79, of Astoria and Yuma, Arizona, died Wednesday, Jan. 20, 2021, in Yuma. Caldwell’s Luce-Layton Mortuary is in charge of the arrangements.

ON THE RECORD

Sexual abuse

- Manuel Cecilio Lopez Cruz, 37, of Seaside, was arraigned Tuesday on two counts of unlawful sexual penetration in the first degree, sexual abuse in the first degree, criminal mistreatment in the first degree and assault in the third degree.

Weapons’ charges

- Kevin Miller, 42, of Astoria, was arrested Monday on U.S. Highway 101 and E. Harbor

Drive in Warrenton following a crash for failure to carry and present a license, felon in possession of a restricted weapon and carrying a concealed weapon.

Theft

- Christian Daly, 31, was arrested Monday at Walmart in Warrenton for theft in the second degree, criminal mischief in the third degree, criminal trespass in the first degree and possession of heroin.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

THURSDAY

Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce Council, noon, (electronic meeting).

Clatsop County Recreational Lands Planning Advisory Committee, 1 p.m., (electronic meeting).

FRIDAY

Clatsop County Board of Commissioners, 11 a.m., work session, (electronic meeting).

Seaside City Council, 2 p.m., goal setting, (electronic meeting).

SATURDAY

Seaside City Council, 9 a.m., goal setting, (electronic meeting).

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A WINTRY DAY

Snow fell in Astoria on Tuesday afternoon.

Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian



Proposals in Washington state seek to phase out fossil fuel heating in buildings

By TOM BANSE
Northwest News Network

A long goodbye to natural gas furnaces and water heating — and possibly other gas appliances — could begin with action by the Washington Legislature this winter. Separately, the Seattle City Council this week begins consideration of a similar proposal to eliminate fossil fuel-based heating in new commercial buildings.

“Buildings are one of our state’s most significant and fastest growing sources of carbon pollution. We must do better — and we can do better,” testified Michael Furze, head of the state energy office, on behalf of Gov. Jay Inslee.

Natural gas utilities and major business associations spoke against the state legislative proposal during an initial public hearing on Friday. The opponents said they want to preserve consumer choice and questioned whether the Pacific Northwest electric grid could handle a big increase in winter heating load.

In December, Inslee unveiled a package of measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, including this proposal to phase out natural gas for space and water heating. As initially conceived, Washington state would have forbidden use of fossil fuels for heating and hot water in new buildings by 2030. The plan sought to convert existing buildings to electric heat by 2050.

The scope of the measure was revised earlier this month when Inslee’s allies in the Legislature introduced identical proposals in the House and Senate to amend the state energy code. The 2030 date to ban heating with fossil fuels in new construction remains. There is no mandate to convert existing buildings from gas to electric heat, but an expectation that utilities will offer incentives for conversions.

“If we don’t start with



Tom Banse/Northwest News Network

Buildings account for the second biggest share of carbon pollution in Washington state, after transportation, largely due to gas furnaces and water heaters.

AT THIS JUNCTURE, IT IS HARD TO GAUGE THE PROSPECTS FOR THE GAS HEAT PHASEOUT PROPOSAL.

clean new buildings, we’re going to be bailing water out of a boat while we’re still drilling holes in the bottom of it,” said state Rep. Alex Ramel, D-Bellingham, the prime sponsor in the House. “That’s why we need to accelerate and strengthen our state’s energy code.”

The legislation is silent about use of natural gas for cooking and clothes dryers. In an interview, Ramel said lawmakers want to transition those appliances to clean energy as well. However, the details may be worked out later between natural gas utilities and regulators at the state utilities commission.

During the well-attended virtual public hearing before the state House Environment and Energy Committee, Cascade Natural Gas, Puget Sound Energy and the utility trade group Northwest Gas Association raised objections.

“(This bill) would jeopardize energy reliability, drive up costs to customers and put gas industry employees across Washington out of work,” said Alyn Spec-

tor, energy efficiency policy manager for Cascade Natural Gas. “This is not the time to eliminate good-paying jobs.”

Business lobbying groups, including the influential Association of Washington Business and the home builders’ Building Industry Association of Washington, also voiced their opposition.

“As we saw this summer in California, we cannot take a healthy grid for granted and losses from even short-lived interruption of power supply can run into the billions,” said Peter Godlewski with the Association of Washington Business. “Shifting consumers and businesses away from natural gas to electricity puts severe pressure on the electric grid at a time when we’re retiring more generating capacity than ever.”

At this juncture, it is hard to gauge the prospects for the gas heat phaseout proposal.

Inslee, who made combating climate change a central plank of his brief run for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2020, has the benefit of large, support-

ive Democratic majorities in both chambers of the Legislature. But the capacity of lawmakers to get much done beyond the basics of passing new state budgets and dealing with the coronavirus pandemic while conducting most business virtually remains to be seen.

Meanwhile, an assortment of West Coast cities are tackling carbon pollution from buildings independently. Around 40 climate-conscious California cities and counties have already passed laws or codes to require new buildings to be all electric.

This week, the Seattle City Council began consideration of an ordinance to ban the use of fossil fuels for heating in new commercial and large apartment buildings. The proposed policy change does not apply to single-family homes and duplexes because the city’s energy code that is open for amendment pertains only to commercial buildings. The effective date of January 2022 is much sooner than the state Legislature’s proposal in the same vein.

“In Seattle, 35% of carbon emissions are from the building sector and they are rising,” Seattle Office of Sustainability and Environment Director Jessica Finn Coven told state legislators in testimony Friday. “Constructing homes and buildings right the first time reduces the likelihood of costly retrofits in the future.”

The Bellingham City Council has also teed up electrification of buildings as part of a broader climate action package. In an email, Bellingham City Councilor Michael Lilliquist said the pandemic had slowed down the work, but it is proceeding. He said city staff were running all of the proposed climate measures through a rigorous, multistep evaluation process.

“We are not yet at the stage to offer specifics that can be incorporated into an ordinance or program,” Lilliquist said.

Bills seek moratorium on supersized dairy farms

By BRADLEY W. PARKS
Oregon Public Broadcasting

State lawmakers will once again consider a moratorium on megadairies after the spectacular failure of a 30,000-cow operation in Eastern Oregon.

A coalition of environmental and animal welfare groups backing the proposal argues megadairies should be regulated like other heavy industry and that, until they are, Oregon should stop permitting them.

“I think that if megadairies had to comply with the environmental laws that all the other industries have to, they would not be as eco-

nomically feasible as they are now,” said Amy van Saun, a senior attorney at the Center for Food Safety’s Portland office.

The proliferation of megadairies has contributed to the downfall of small- and mid-sized dairy farms worldwide. Dairy remains a billion-dollar industry in Oregon.

Livestock account for nearly one-sixth of global greenhouse gas emissions. Pollution from livestock facilities also poses significant public health risks. However, agriculture isn’t regulated to the same degree as oil and gas or manufacturing.

“It’s really dependent on a lot of crutches to exist,” van

Saun said. “Some of that is subsidy ... some of that is exemption from regulations.”

The legislation would temporarily prohibit the state Department of Agriculture and Department of Environmental Quality from issuing or renewing licenses or permits to new dairies seeking to keep 2,500 cows or more. The moratorium would also apply to existing dairies seeking to expand to that size.

It would require Oregon to study megadairies’ effects on air, water, public health, animal welfare and the dairy industry itself and to develop laws addressing those impacts.

This is the second attempt

at a megadairy moratorium in Oregon since the notorious Lost Valley Farms dairy in Boardman crashed and burned almost immediately after it opened in 2017, piling up more than 200 environmental violations in a year and a half.

“Honestly, they gave us a black eye,” said Tami Kerr, executive director of the Oregon Dairy Farmers Association.

Lost Valley was the second-largest dairy in Oregon, permitted to keep up to 30,000 cows. The Department of Agriculture revoked Lost Valley’s permit in 2018 and the dairy folded soon after.