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CORONAVIRUS

Public health director accepts new job

McNickle led response to pandemic

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

Michael McNickle, who has directed Clatsop County's response to the coronavirus pandemic, has accepted a job in Washington state.



The Daily World in Aberdeen reported that McNickle will serve as director of Grays Harbor

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MORE INSIDE

County expects larger allocations of vaccines • A6

City looks at denser housing

Exploring ideas from countywide study

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Astorian

The Astoria City Council and the Planning Commission appear supportive of a suite of measures from a countywide housing study to encourage denser and more affordable housing, with several caveats to preserve livability and historic character.

The council and commission met Thursday to find commonality on which policy and development code strategies in the 2019 housing study to pursue. The meeting came shortly after the two boards approved new state-mandated development code amendments to expand the use of accessory dwelling units for increased density.

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Photos by Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

WineKraft has outdoor, riverside seating.

North Coast welcomes the return of tourism a year into the pandemic

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Astorian

North Coast leaders have a very different message to send to tourists than they did last spring.

"We feel like we're ready for spring break," Seaside Mayor Jay Barber said. "We're inviting people to come to Seaside."

When spring break vacationers descended last March to escape coronavirus-related shutdowns in their own cities and take advantage of sunny weather at the beach, residents were alarmed.

City and county leaders quickly adopted emergency orders to temporarily ban visitors from hotels and campgrounds. Seaside — hit hard by both the shutdown measures, but also the influx of tourists — restricted access to city parks and beaches as well. Cannon Beach sought to exclude even daytrippers.

They echoed Gov. Kate Brown's message to "Stay Home, Stay Healthy."

In Seaside, one resident was more direct. He held up a handmade sign that simply read, "Go home."

Now there are signs that cities are ready to welcome tourists back.

The Astoria Downtown Historic District Association hired a new community outreach officer whose duties include parking enforcement as traffic picks up again. Astoria's leaders have relaxed rules on sidewalk dining, as well as for parklets, which allow restaurants and bars to expand outdoor seating into street-side parking spots.

In Cannon Beach, the City Council recently gave city staff the go-ahead to work with businesses interested in using parking spots in front of their buildings for outdoor seating. The city has already allowed restaurants and bars with their own parking lots to set up tables in those lots.

In Seaside, the city has eased some parking standards to allow for outdoor tables and tents.



A sign advertises businesses and restaurants open in Seaside.

'I THINK WE CAN SAY WE ARE READY FOR TOURISTS. WE KNOW HOW TO OPERATE OUR BUSINESSES SAFELY — AND OUR CLIENTELE, OUR VISITORS, KNOW HOW TO VISIT SAFELY.'

David Reid | executive director for the Astoria-Warrenton Area Chamber of Commerce

Many businesses are still reeling and suffering, but David Reid, the executive director for the Astoria-Warrenton Area Chamber of Commerce, believes the North Coast economy has entered into a recovery phase.

Precautionary measures like wearing

masks and social distancing are now normal. Though some people continue to push back, in general, businesses and communities are no longer educating people about these requirements.

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A memorial for Dr. Ben Cockcroft.

Providence Seaside Hospital

Seaside doctor had 'spirit of service'

Cockcroft found dead after snowboarding

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

A longtime Seaside doctor was found dead after he was reported missing Monday while snowboarding in Washington state.

Dr. Ben Cockcroft, 62, who practiced medicine at Providence Seaside Hospital for nearly 30 years, was located by a King County search and rescue team on Wednesday at Stevens Pass.

"He has cared for multiple generations — grandparents to babies

— and is well-known and loved by all," the hospital said in a statement. "He also loved his patients and community, saying in a profile article, 'In a sense, I feel I have thousands of friends here.' And indeed he does."

"He also had a spirit of service, both in North Coast communities and also in taking time to share his medical expertise and bring much-needed supplies to Oaxaca, Mexico."

"Dr. Cockcroft was a loving father and husband. He and his wife, Lindy, have been at the heart of so much in the community.



Dr. Ben Cockcroft

Many people here have watched their three children — April, Travis and Lucas — grow up, playing and learning in school, sports and activities. He and his family loved traveling, winter sports and being outdoors. Dr. Cockcroft also had a passion for surfing contests and loved playing and spending time with dogs.

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