

**CORONAVIRUS****SEASIDE**

## A pitch for paid parking downtown

A potential revenue source for city

By R.J. MARX  
The Astorian

SEASIDE — Dozens of beach towns have effectively managed parking inventory and captured revenue with a seasonal paid parking program, businessman Adam Israel told the City Council in February.

“I think it would be a great fit, a great solution for downtown,” he said. “The long-term goal would be to build a second- or third-level parking structure, and use those funds to help pay for that parking structure.”

The system works with an app, Passport Parking, now used in a 40-space parking lot on Avenue A next to the Elks Lodge.

Seaside Park ‘n’ Pay LLC would manage the 225-space parking lot adjacent to the Seaside Civic and Convention Center. The paid parking season could run from March through October. Proposed hourly rates are \$1 a day Monday through Thursday and \$2 per hour on weekends.

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## Recreation restrictions ease in Seaside

Moves come amid lower risk for virus

By R.J. MARX  
The Astorian

SEASIDE — As Clatsop County moved into the lower-risk category for the coronavirus on Friday, the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District has lifted restrictions at the Sunset Pool and child care facilities.

“We’re really hopeful and optimistic based on the daily counts the county is providing,” Skyler Archibald, the park district’s executive director, said. “We have hopefully made it through the last of our forced closures.”

The pool has reopened and closed six times since March 2020. “I’m grateful and appreciative to our staff, the county health department, which have been great, and our patrons, which have accepted the changes and challenges of being open and still kept their patronage really high,” Archibald said.

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The entrance to Ecola Creek Forest Reserve in Cannon Beach.

Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

## Fire protection options under debate for Ecola Creek Forest Reserve

The forest shelters Cannon Beach’s primary water source

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ  
The Astorian

CANNON BEACH — The arrow on a fire danger sign in Ecola Creek Forest Reserve rests dead center on a green wedge labeled “low.” But a debate is simmering about how best to protect the forested acres that shelter the city’s primary water source as the threat of catastrophic wildfires in Oregon seems to grow each year.

City emergency management staff and the rural fire protection district are pushing for improvements to roads in the reserve. Right now, they say, the roads are in need of repair and options are limited if they have to respond to a fire.



However, in a draft update of the reserve’s management plan, the city’s Parks and Community Services Committee recommends minimal to no road enhancement. They, along with some city councilors, worry that improved access will only invite more people to the reserve and increase the risk of someone sparking an accidental fire.

They point to data collected from the Oregon Department of Forestry that shows fires on the coast have tended to be accidental and human-caused, often associated with logging-related activities like burning slash piles but also campfires and smoking.

They also examined data from the National Park Service for the agency’s Fort Clatsop unit that concluded the risk of wildfire on the North Coast was gen-



Katie Frankowicz/The Astorian

A fire danger indicator at Ecola Creek Forest Reserve put the risk at ‘low’ in February, but city leaders are examining how best to protect the forest from wildfire going forward.

erally low given annual rainfall, cooler temperatures and humidity levels.

But Rick Hudson, the emergency manager for Cannon Beach, points to power lines that cut through the reserve — a potential fire hazard — and the fact that people already wander on roads and trails. He respects the parks committee’s work and agrees that “people are responsible for being irresponsible.”

To him, that means plans and infrastructure like roads are even more necessary, especially as the climate shifts and the state continues to see fires like the ones that burned across Oregon last year.

“It’s impossible to keep human beings out of that environment,” he told The Astorian. “It’s already open.”

### Damp places

Though the coast has burned before — the infamous Tillamook Burn fires

of 1933, which destroyed more than 300,000 acres of timber in what is now the Tillamook State Forest, are the oft-cited examples — wildfire is not something many residents worry about from year to year. North Coast forests are notoriously damp places and some spots on hiking trails will stay muddy almost year-round.

But last year, 1.1 million acres burned across Oregon, fueled by warm and dry conditions associated with climate change and unusually strong winds. In August and September, much of the West was burning.

On the North Coast, evidence of the massive fires raging elsewhere arrived in the form of thick smoke that blotted out the sun and caused temperatures to drop. Timber managers shut down recreational access to forestlands

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Katie Frankowicz/The Astorian

Roger Hayes, who works for the Loaves and Fishes meals program housed in the Astoria Senior Center, has seen how the coronavirus pandemic has made things more difficult for seniors.

## Serving seniors, fostering connection

Limited by virus, senior center adapts

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ  
The Astorian

Every day, people stop by the Astoria Senior Center, peer through the glass door and ask executive director Larry Miller, “So when do you expect to be open?”

The answer: He’s not sure. The senior center temporarily closed almost a year ago because of the coronavirus pandemic, shutting down weekly activities and opportunities for seniors to connect, socialize and easily access a variety of resources. Now, Clatsop County’s risk level, which had tog-



gled between high risk and extreme risk this winter, dropped to the cool green of lower risk and vaccine distribution has begun among the elderly.

“That tells me that perhaps something is going to happen,” Miller said.

The pandemic has been hard on seniors. Age and health concerns place them in the high risk category for the virus. Many already were living in isolation before the

pandemic hit, reliant on places like the senior center for regular social interactions or even for help with getting to the grocery store.

Though Miller will occasionally let someone in to use a computer for necessary business, the only seniors who now routinely enter the building are the volunteers who help Roger Hayes prepare lunches for delivery and pickup with the Loaves and Fishes meals program that operates in tandem with the center.

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