

IN BRIEF

Astoria Aquatic Center reopens
March 15 to reservations

The Astoria Aquatic Center reopens March 15 to reservations for pool and gym use.

The city parks department began taking reservations by phone, email and online Tuesday for up to two weeks in advance, depending on Clatsop County's coronavirus risk level. Pools cannot operate unless the county is at high risk or lower.

The aquatic center will open 7 to 10 a.m., 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 4 to 7 p.m. Mondays and Wednesdays, and 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturdays. Up to 36 people will be allowed in the facility at one time with masks, health screenings and social distancing.

Patrons will reserve a 45-minute swim time starting at the top of every hour, with the pool closed between each slot for sanitizing. Use of the gym will be staggered, with 45-minute use periods starting on the half-hour to avoid crowding at the front desk.

The aquatic center will use singular drop-in rates, including \$18 for a family of up to five, \$7.50 for an adult and \$5.50 for senior citizens and youth. Reserve spots by calling 503-325-7027, emailing tpatterson@astoria.or.us or online at astoriaparks.com.

Patrons are encouraged to bring towels from home, carry spare clothes easy to change into and have other equipment on hand to maximize use of the pools. Limited exercise equipment will be available for checkout. Day use lockers will be available on a first-come, first-served basis and for \$15 a month.

The city is offering tours for individuals and groups of up to six people in advance of reopening to showcase safety protocols. Tours will be available at 8 and 9 a.m., noon and 5 and 6 p.m. March 8, March 10 and March 12.

Astoria adds Buoy Beer,
Scoular to enterprise zone

The Astoria City Council on Monday approved applications by Buoy Beer and Pilot House Distilling's parent company, River Barrel Brewing Inc., and fishmeal company Scoular to join the Clatsop Enterprise Zone.

Entry provides five years of property tax breaks on new investments.

River Barrel is planning an \$8 million expansion of its waterfront campus, including a new brewery for Buoy Beer in the former Video Horizons building and a new headquarters for Pilot House in a nearby warehouse.

Scoular plans to spend \$10 million on a new fishmeal plant near the Astoria Regional Airport taking in scraps from local seafood processors and turning out protein for aquaculture and pet food.

The enterprise zone application requires the projects to create new jobs paying at least 130% of the county's average income. Buoy's project is expected to create between 15 and 20 new jobs, while Scoular's new plant would employ around 10 people.

The projects still need the signoff from elected leaders for Clatsop County, Warrenton and the Port of Astoria, all co-sponsors of the enterprise zone.

— *The Astorian*

Oregon wave energy project
gets federal go-ahead

Federal energy regulators gave Oregon State University the go-ahead Monday for a groundbreaking wave energy testing facility off the coast.

The PacWave South project is designed to facilitate and speed up the development of wave energy technology, which harnesses the motion of the ocean to generate electricity.

Oregon is considered to have a high potential for wave energy generation — much higher by coastal area than Washington state or California. The Oregon Department of Energy says near-shore wave energy projects alone have the potential to power 28 million homes annually.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission issued a license to the project, but a final review period must pass before Oregon State gets the final go-ahead to begin construction.

"It's huge. It's the first license of its type to be issued in the United States," said Oregon State's Burke Hales, chief scientist on the project.

— *Oregon Public Broadcasting*

DEATHS

Feb. 26, 2021
FICKEN, Sterling John, 71, of Astoria, died in Astoria. Caldwell's Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

MORRISSON, Patrick Sidney, 72, of Gearhart, died in Gearhart. Caldwell's Funeral & Cremation Arrangement Center in Seaside is in charge of the arrangements.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

THURSDAY

Maritime Memorial Committee, 2 p.m., City Hall, 1095 Duane St.

Astoria Development Commission and Port of Astoria Commission, 4:30 p.m., City Hall, 1095 Duane St.

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

Seaside Parks Advisory Committee, 6 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

the Astorian

Established July 1, 1873
(USPS 035-000)

Published Tuesday, Thursday
and Saturday by EO Media Group,
949 Exchange St., PO Box 210, Astoria, OR
97103 Telephone 503-325-3211,
800-781-3211 or Fax 503-325-6573.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to
The Astorian, PO Box 210, Astoria, OR
97103-0210

DailyAstorian.com

MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MEMBER CERTIFIED AUDIT OF
CIRCULATIONS, INC.

Circulation phone number:
800-781-3214

Periodicals postage paid at ASTORIA, OR

ADVERTISING OWNERSHIP

All advertising copy and illustrations
prepared by The Astorian become the
property of The Astorian and may not
be reproduced for any use without
explicit prior approval.

COPYRIGHT ©

Entire contents © Copyright,
2021 by The Astorian.



Printed on
recycled paper

Subscription rates
Effective January 12, 2021

MAIL

EZpay (per month).....	\$10.75
13 weeks in advance.....	\$37.00
26 weeks in advance.....	\$71.00
52 weeks in advance.....	\$135.00

DIGITAL

EZpay (per month).....	\$8.25
------------------------	--------

‘Norwegian fishing village’
coming at Seaview CottagesRehabbing an
aging motel

By LUKE WHITTAKER
Chinook Observer

SEAVIEW, Wash. — Through the fading yellow paint, they found the perfect place.

In early February, Richard Wood and Doug Voncannon became the owners of Seaview Cottages, with intentions of restoring the 16-unit lot to former prominence.

The property is undergoing a complete overhaul over the next several months, with a specific theme in mind.

"The image we're portraying for the Seaview Cottages is going to be a Norwegian fishing village," Wood said. "We've always talked about owning a boutique hotel. This is the perfect start."

Wood and Voncannon came to Long Beach from Moss Beach, California, just south of San Francisco, in June to look at a summer home, but discovered much more.

"We found we have the best neighbors in the world and just fell in love with the place," Voncannon said.

Wood had fond memories from the peninsula as a youth.

"I used to come to Long Beach 25 years ago and fell in love with the area," he said.

"That's kind of what brought us here. We decided to buy a summer house here for our kids and just make trips down for the summer. We ended up getting here and, because of COVID-19, didn't want to be in California. We got here thinking we would maybe move into our house for a few weeks or a month then go back home, but we haven't left."

It was during this time that Voncannon noticed the Seaview Motel was for sale.

"Doug pointed out that there was one for sale nearby, from where we lived in Long Beach. We thought we would take a look with no expectations," Wood said. "As we started viewing each cabin it became apparent that this place was pretty special. We instantly looked at each other and realized this could be a great investment. Not only



Photos by Luke Whittaker/Chinook Observer

TOP: Doug Voncannon and Richard Wood became the official owners of Seaview Cottages in February. **ABOVE:** Richard Wood talks about the changes coming to Seaview Cottages.

a great real estate investment, this could bring more life into Seaview. This is something that's been here for so long but needs some revitalization."

The work started almost immediately.

"We hired an inspector to come and do a full inspection. The report came back really good, much better than we anticipated. We put down an offer right there and then," Wood said. "We just fell in love with the property. We saw past a lot of the issues to the future to see what we could make this motel become. We will not rent any units until they are 100% remodeled."

The transition from the new owners came at an ideal time.

"We talked to old owners who loved the place but were ready to retire," Voncannon

said. "We relocated here not long ago and wanted something the neighborhood could be proud of."

Wood began his hospitality career working in Beverly Hills hotels before operating restaurants in San Diego and a catering business in Northern California.

"I've been in hotel and restaurant business most of my life. I was a chef and restaurateur as well. I did hotel consulting and staffing all around the country. For many years I lived in hotels, helping them out and revitalizing them. I always loved roadside motels. It's my passion," he said.

Voncannon will play a less hands-on role, he said.

"I'm more of a silent partner," said Voncannon, who works full-time in the financial field.

Among the first changes

was the name, from Seaview Motel to Seaview Cottages. The sprawling property, located on Pacific Way, occupies about one acre with 16 units, including family suites and several one-bedroom cabins among the original structures.

"The story goes that the cabin units were officer quarters in WWII. They were barged here to form the motel," Wood said.

Some of the original structures were combined and added on over the years.

The property, including four parcels, has changed ownership three times over the past 10 years, according to public records on TaxSifter. Most recently it was owned by Frederick Speer and Huiming Huang, who purchased it from Lawrence and Amy Cook for \$435,000 in 2011 before selling it to Voncannon and Wood for \$675,000.

Their goal is to have the first units finished and open to customers in April.

"I started lining up as many people as I could to get the work underway. This is going to be a yearlong project to get all the cabins remodeled and up to where we want to take it," Richard said.

Some projects will have to wait until summer.

"The painting can't start until August or September, but right now we're starting with the four one-bedroom units. They will be completed in April. We plan on at least opening those and then we would like to have one or two units done each month until the entire property is good," Wood said.

The main building, formerly the owners' quarters, will be converted into an additional unit, cottage or serve as a lobby. Another vacant building on the property, formerly a restaurant, will be leased separately.

"We've already interviewed two different restaurateurs who are interested in leasing the space," Wood said. "We're offering an extremely good compensation package (a five-year lease with a five-year option) to anyone who does come in and lease it, so they can help us revitalize this area."

‘Keeper of the keys’ leaves convention center

Darnell retires
after two decades
as sales director

By R.J. MARX
The Astorian

SEASIDE — The banner Gretchen Darnell wore read "Officially Retired." A crown symbolized her role as doyenne of the Seaside Civic and Convention Center.

"I am sort of the 'keeper of the keys,'" she said. "I hold the key to book the building."

Darnell started in July 1997 as the convention center's sales director. She celebrated her retirement last week in a meet and greet at the remodeled convention center.

Not that attendees needed an introduction. Her family, the Fulops, had a summer home in Gearhart for four generations that they spent time at while growing up.

She relocated to the North Coast when her ex-husband, Rick Darnell, was hired as a Seaside police officer. "Rick saw that job and said, 'You know Gretchen, this job has your name on it,' because I was always in hotel cruise ships group sales. My parents owned travel agencies. I worked for American wine cruises, Intercontinental Hotels."

The last job she had before joining the convention center was regional sales manager at American Hawaii Cruises, based in San Francisco.

When Darnell arrived in Seaside in 1997, Karen Murray was the convention center's general manager. Russ



R.J. Marx/The Astorian

Gretchen Darnell, with daughters Lindsey Darnell and Lauren Oxley, at her retirement party last week.

Vandenberg, the convention center's general manager today, joined in 2005.

Darnell attended countless breakfasts, lunches and community meetings to promote the convention center and its value to Seaside. In the process, she regaled the community with inside tales of the cat shows, bridge tournaments, food festivals and ghostly goings-on at the Oregon Ghost Conference.

Over the decades she witnessed the change from low-tech to high-tech management, from booking methods to building features.

"It's changed a great deal," Darnell said. "When I first came, everything was done in a three-ring binder. We didn't have the internet or email, so everything was done sort of by hand and with a lot of phone calls, whereas today most of the business I do is by email."

The job's mission remains the same, she added, representing the convention center in a positive way throughout the Northwest.

As for her decision to step

down, she said, "It's time, I guess."

Notwithstanding restrictions as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, Darnell said she is going out on a high note. "We made it through the expansion, and the calendars are looking really good," she said, with event bookings and signed contracts through 2030.

As Clatsop County moved into the lower-risk category for the coronavirus this month, Darnell looks forward to an increase in attendance. "We will just keep pushing forward and booking clients as we can," Darnell said.

A silver lining, she said, is that during the pandemic smaller local groups have been able to use the building. These, in turn, can prove to be ambassadors to statewide organizations like the Oregon Realtors Association or the Oregon Society of Certified Public Accountants.

Darnell raised three children as a single parent while working at the convention center.

Her daughter, Lindsey Darnell, is her oldest, living in Portland with her son. Lauren Oxley is her middle child. She lives in Seaside with her husband, Wyatt, and two daughters.

"Addy Darnell was my youngest child, and she passed December 2014, at age 20," Darnell said. "She had an emergency liver transplant in 2017, and survived 3 1/2 years with multiple health issues. She died of liver failure, the root cause was Wilson's disease, which is a rare metabolic disease she was born with."

"One of my other daughters also suffer from the disease. Addy was the bravest person I have ever known. The city and Russ were so supportive while Addy struggled through health issues, and I am so grateful for that. I took a lot of time off."

Tina Eilers, the convention center's office manager, will serve as the interim director of sales. The position will first be advertised in-house, Darnell said, to consider candidates that work for the city. If a candidate is not selected, the search could be widened.

What's next for Darnell? Spending time with grandchildren, traveling, gardening, walking and volunteering.

"It's been an honor and a privilege to represent the city in this way for as many years as I have," Darnell said. "I feel really confident in the team that is here. I leave with full confidence. I know they'll be in great hands. We have a really strong team here now."