

## Seaside student-athlete tests positive for virus

By R.J. MARX  
The Astorian

SEASIDE — A student-athlete has tested positive for the coronavirus, Seaside High School Principal Jeff Roberts said.

The Seaside School District sent a note to parents

Tuesday afternoon informing them of the positive case.

The case comes as the school district is preparing to open the new high school campus to students on Thursday.

The student has not been in the campus building, nor has anyone from that resi-

dence been in the building, Roberts said at the school district's board meeting on Tuesday.

"With this environment, there's a cost to doing business," he said.

All students and staff that came in direct contact with the student have been noti-

fied and are required to quarantine at home. Roberts said they are not to attend practice. "We will continue to work with the local health authority to provide as much information to those families as we can and to get them back into the building when it's safe to do so," he said.

## Fort George: 'We're still building back'

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Just a few blocks east, the owners of Buoy Beer Co., the other major brewer in town, are jacking up the roof of the former Video Horizons for an expanded brewhouse. They are also planning to turn a nearby warehouse into a new location for sister company Pilot House Distilling.

### 'Kingpin'

Nemlowill and Harris drove their first 8.5-barrel brewhouse — nicknamed "Sweet Virginia" — home from the East Coast and opened a small pub in the Fort George Building on Duane Street. In 2009, they bought almost the entire city block, including the Lovell Building, where they installed a 20-barrel commercial brewhouse — "Little Miss Texas" — and continued an ascension into one of the state's premier craft breweries.

A decade later, the Lovell Building was filled to the brim with tanks and a canning line. Walls of bulk-ordered cans filled the upstairs, along with a growing barrel-aging program in the basement.

Nemlowill and Harris bought a plot of land in Warrenton for a new distribution hub. But when the seafood company owners of Astoria Warehousing decided to consolidate operations to Kent, Washington, Fort George saw an opportunity and purchased what Nemlowill now calls Fort George Waterfront.

Central to the new brewery is the 60-barrel brewhouse — nicknamed "Kingpin" — Fort George bought at auction after Portland's BridgePort Brewing closed in 2019.

Kingpin can turn out 60 barrels of wort — the sugary liquid extracted from grains and used in fermentation — in a batch. Just as important is the large bank of fermentation and conditioning tanks arrayed around the main warehouse. They include fermenta-



Chris Nemlowill walks outside Fort George's new distribution site on the Astoria waterfront.

tion tanks brought from downtown, lagering tanks from BridgePort and more conditioning tanks manufactured in Vancouver, Washington.

"This is opening up our opportunity to have a lot more variety," Nemlowill said. "We can make more lagers. We can make more barrel-aged beers. We can experiment a lot more, because we're going to have more capacity over in the Lovell Building."

While Fort George Waterfront efficiently pumps out the hits, Little Miss Texas and the Lovell Building will transition into a research and development brewery.

Michal Frankowicz, who started serving and cooking at Fort George 12 years ago, has worked his way up to head brewer overseeing a brewing staff of more than 15. Frankowicz said he's excited about the possibilities downtown now that Fort George has an efficient production facility for its flagship beers.

"There's two spots on that (downtown) block that have 19 to 21 taps, and one that has 14 taps," Frankowicz said. "We'll have an array of beer for people to come check out, for our locals to have a place to come hang out, to always have something new for them."

Next to Kingpin is a new German-made canning line that can seal more than 260 beers a minute. Speedier canning is essential for Fort

George, which Nemlowill said has been selling about 95% of beer in cans since the pandemic restricted public gathering spots. The brewery has stockpiled several million cans in the warehouses in case factories shut down during the pandemic.

At the far end of the main warehouse, Fort George has built out a large cold storage. In addition to its own beer, the brewery handles distribution throughout the North Coast and coastal southwest Washington state for more than 30 craft breweries and cideries, along with a growing wine portfolio.

Brad DePuyt, who started eight years ago serving beer on weekends and working on the canning line at Fort George, has worked his way up to senior vice president of operations for the company, overseeing a growing distribution business. By the end of the year, he said, Fort George will nearly double to 11,500 square feet of cold storage, allowing everything it handles to stay cold.

"And that's cool for things like kombucha or items that have to be cold-stored ... It just kind of puts quality at the top," DePuyt said.

### Transition

The new brewery comes at a time of leadership transition for Fort George. Nemlowill has been the sole owner since October. Harris contin-



Edward Stratton/The Astorian  
Brad Green, who worked for Astoria Warehousing, transitioned to maintenance work for Fort George Brewery.

ues working for the brewery, with plans to retire in the fall.

Zack O'Connor, who like DePuyt started as a server nearly a decade ago, has also been elevated to senior vice president, overseeing human resources and the brewery's three downtown pubs.

Fort George was forced to furlough around 140 people a year ago because of the pandemic, going to a bare-bones crew of around 30. O'Connor said it was one of the worst days of his life, but that the company is back to about two-thirds of its prepandemic employment.

"We're still building back, and this last reopening for dine-in was good news," he said. "It was really fun to be able to recall some of our amazing staff again. And then we've actually welcomed a couple new team members as well. So we're not back to where we were prepandemic, but we're moving in the right direction."

One of Fort George's new hires during the pandemic was Brad Green, who worked on the production line at Astoria Warehousing palletizing labeled salmon cans. Green now helps maintain the brewery's waterfront and downtown campuses.

Green hasn't given much thought to being the lone holdover from Astoria Warehousing, besides being thankful for having a job and happy the warehouses stayed in operation.

"I think Astoria has enough hotels," he said. "Tourist dollars are one thing, but you also — unless you want to have a service economy, which is nothing but take care of tourists — you need a manufacturing base here, for tax reasons, for the economy here."

"It's nice to see these buildings being reused for close to their intended purposes, I mean as a production facility to produce whatever," Green said. "It's different businesses, different people, but it is kind of interesting to be a link to the past."



Thousands of cans of beer sit in the Fort George warehouse.

## Fishhawk Lake: Project would cost more than \$4M

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A state investigation blamed the draining for sucking fish through the drainpipe and increased turbidity downstream, dumping sediment and depleting the dissolved oxygen in the water. State biologists estimated that 30,391 fish were killed, including 20,539 endangered coho salmon, 4,047 steelhead trout, 5,346 cutthroat trout and 459 trout of undetermined species.

The state Department of Environmental Quality fined the homeowners association and required a water quality management plan and a 10-year schedule for becoming compliant with environmental standards.

The state Department of Fish and Wildlife is seeking a separate claim against the homeowners association for the fish kill, but has not disclosed more information.

The homeowners association hired law firms Schwabe, Williamson & Wyatt and Hart Wagner and called for a hearing to contest the Department of Environmental Quality's penalty. The lawyers argued that instead of being reckless, the association drained the lake in response to pressure from state agencies to repair the drainpipe and avoid a total failure of the dam in a major flood.

The lawyers argued that the association timed the draining of the lake with

the low-flow period of Fishhawk Creek, adhered to the state's in-water work period and installed curtains downstream of the dam to decrease turbidity. They blamed the state for a lack of follow-up regarding permitting and other guidance, and said the association "reasonably believed the state's silence to be tacit approval of its plans to proceed."

"There is no evidence to support DEQ's claims of significant negative impacts to Fishhawk Lake's aquatic life," the lawyers wrote. "DEQ estimates of damage are grossly inflated based upon misassumptions and extrapolations from limited and unreliable evidence."

The homeowners asso-

ciation plans to begin construction this year of a new spillway over one side of the dam and a fish ladder tunneled through the other. The project would cost more than \$4 million and finish in 2022.

County and state leaders and agencies, including the Department of Fish and Wildlife, have backed the project. The association is applying for state and federal grants based on safety and the project's benefits to fish passage.

"Beginning construction is contingent upon permit and approvals being issued on time and resolution of the state's claims," said Nicole Case, a member of the homeowners association.

## County reports seven new virus cases

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Clatsop County reported seven new coronavirus cases over the past few days.

On Wednesday, the county reported one new case.

A man in his 30s living in the northern part of the county was recovering at home.

On Tuesday, the county reported six new cases.

The cases include three girls under 10 and a male between 10 and 19 living in the southern part of the county.

The others live in the northern part of the county and include a woman in her 40s and a man in his 30s.

All six were recovering at home.

On Friday, the county incorrectly identified a new case as a man in his 20s living in the northern part of the county. The man is in his 30s.

The county has recorded 798 cases since the start of the pandemic. According to the county, 18 were hospitalized and six have died.

## Tax: There could be difficult choices ahead

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a call comes in. The district lacks daily staffing, as well as a dedicated fire marshal, someone who is able to review development plans and consistently provide fire inspections for hotels and other businesses that need this documentation for insurance purposes.

Funded primarily through property tax revenue, the fire district was not interested in pursuing another bond measure that would only continue to draw money from locals, while the city says it is not able to take on the cost and logistics of running its own fire department.

But there is a disconnect between what people assume the fire district can provide and what it can consistently offer, Reckmann said.

"I believe it is the expectation of visitors that we have a surf and a rope team," he told city councilors. "When they come and they hike the trails and they're in the water, I don't think anyone gives it a second thought: Do we have those services if they get in trouble? Or, who is going to come pull them out of the water?"

Meanwhile, the city, local businesses and residents have their own expectations.

Going forward, if the fire district is not able to boost revenue streams and fund personnel, "the only other thing we can start doing is looking at services we provide," said Garry Smith, the president of the fire district board.

"All that we're really required legally to supply is structural firefighting," he reminded the City Council at a recent work session. "We don't have to do wildland firefighting. We don't have to do (emergency medical care). We don't have to do surf rescue."

The fire district doesn't

want to give up providing these services, Reckmann said, but there could be difficult choices ahead.

Last year, the district responded to 466 calls for service, an increase over prior years. Of those, 77% — 344 calls — came from nonresidents.

The fire district saw a dip in calls when Cannon Beach largely shut down to tourism in the spring and summer as coronavirus cases spiked across Oregon. Call levels shot up in September when visitors returned and remained high through the end of the year. Already this year, for January and February, the number of calls is higher than what the district saw in prior years.

When Reckmann recently reached out to businesses through the Cannon Beach Chamber of Commerce, he was told by some not to put the question of a food and beverage tax on the ballot. But city leaders believe it is the best way to facilitate a fully public and transparent process.

City and fire district leaders have some work to do before a formal ballot proposal moves forward, however. They would like to be able to answer certain questions first. For example, it isn't clear how much money the tax would raise or exactly how revenue generated should be split between the district and the city.

Still, Mayor Sam Steidel believes visitors need to help pay their part. Besides, he said, many are already visiting from areas that have a sales tax. He expects a small tax like the one proposed would barely register.

To him, it is a no-brainer how people should vote on such a proposal.

"I think it's the residents that are the ones footing the bill for all the tourists who want to go swimming in the ocean when it's only like 4 degrees out there," he said.

## Business: 'I don't want to have any more issues with him'

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with this, if we're sure that it's three cars a week."

Gutierrez agreed to the change in language to limit customer vehicles, pleading with the city to adopt language clear enough to stop what he described as continual harassment by Fulton.

"If you guys do this, I don't want to have any more issues with him," Gutierrez said. "... I don't want him taking any more pictures of me, recording me and just constantly doing this on a daily basis. I'm tired of it. I'm tired of turning around and seeing him down at the property line."

While approving Guti-

errez's business, the City Council broached the possibility of limiting future auto-detailing businesses in residential areas. City Councilor Joan Herman said she appreciated the deal struck in Gutierrez's case, but that the development code likely intended to prohibit such businesses and should be clarified more around service on automobiles, appliances and other large equipment.

"I think, going forward, it would be more clear to include as a prohibited business a detailing business," Herman said. "Mr. Gutierrez's business is safe. It's in, so that's not an issue. But ... I kind of think that was the intent of the development code."