



INSIDE

Astorian

148TH YEAR, NO. 122

WEEKEND EDITION // SATURDAY, APRIL 10, 2021

\$1.50

CORONAVIRUS

Library renovation to go in stages

Fundraising was disrupted by pandemic

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Astorian

The renovation of the Astoria Library will begin with a scaled-back first phase to kick-start progress amid a pandemic that has halted fundraising.

City Manager Brett Estes and David Wark, a historical architect hired to design a refurbished library, on Wednesday presented a proposal to remove a second-floor mezzanine that does not comply with requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The library's entire collection would be housed on the first floor using tall and movable stacks.

The initial work would replace two concrete panels along Duane Street to introduce more natural light. It would also enhance the children's areas, replace bulky furniture with more movable objects, move the Astoriana historical collection to the basement for researchers and install new carpets and paint.

The project is estimated to cost \$750,000, paid for through money from the sale of carbon sequestration credits set aside by the city for the library.

"The improvements that we spend money on now should allow for and be

See Library, Page A2

Gearhart takes new look at firehouse location

Proposed land exchange off Highlands Lane

By R.J. MARX
The Astorian

GEARHART — Threats of litigation at the proposed High Point location on North Marion Avenue and a reluctant seller are among the reasons Gearhart is looking at new sites for the city's firehouse.

They may have found one at the Cottages at Gearhart, a proposed 30-acre subdivision off of Highlands Lane, north of the city. Developers hope to swap part of the property to the city for a firehouse in exchange for bringing the property into the urban growth boundary and annexed into the city.

Peter Watts, the city's attorney, said at the City Council's meeting on Wednesday that the developers have indicated they're willing to donate a portion of the property as well as land for a public park.

See Gearhart, Page A6



A preschool student at Charis Kids colors in a calendar.

Charis Kids

CANNON BEACH PRESCHOOL TO CLOSE

Parents, former teachers disappointed by the loss of Charis Kids

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Astorian

CANNON BEACH — The same day Ashley Nelson decided to accept a full-time job, the preschool where her children attended an after-school program announced it would close in June.

Nelson, previously a stay-at-home mom, had been counting on Charis Kids in Cannon Beach as she dipped back into the workforce. Now, she and more than 20 other families are trying to figure out what to do next.

Charis Kids, owned by the Cannon Beach Conference Center, is the only



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Charis Kids at the Cannon Beach Conference Center will close in June.

local preschool option in the city and one of just a few such programs avail-

able across Clatsop County. The main preschool and after-school programs will end June 18. It isn't clear yet if a summer program will go ahead as planned.

Charis Kids is a long-standing community institution with an excellent reputation, Nelson said. When it closes, her children will not only miss out on a faith-based curriculum Nelson values and the care of well-trained and certified teachers, they will also lose the community that had formed around the preschool.

"It's an incredible hole," Nelson said.

See Preschool, Page A6



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Sebastian Rivas Guitron Antonio walks across the field to receive his diploma with the Fishermen scoreboard displaying 2020 at Astoria High School's drive-in graduation in June.

North Coast schools contemplate another pandemic graduation

Many plans for June still in flux

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Astorian

While it takes effort to become a graduate, a school graduation ceremony is usually the easy part.

But as schools approach another June under the cloud of the coronavirus

See Graduation, Page A6

MORE INSIDE

County reports eighth virus death • A2



Edward Stratton/The Astorian

The Port of Astoria will save an estimated \$550,000 after refinancing the loan used to buy the Taggart Building on Pier 1.

Port hopes to save big on loans

Refinancing a loan for the Taggart Building

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Astorian

The Port of Astoria will save more than \$500,000 by refinancing a loan used to buy the Taggart Building on Pier 1.

The Port took out a \$1.7 million loan with Clatsop Community Bank in 2010 to buy the three-story office complex, named after the family of former Port Commissioner Glenn Taggart, who

developed the building. The loan was later transferred to Lewis & Clark Bank.

The agency worked with David Ulbricht, an advisor with the Special Districts Association of Oregon, to recruit other banks and refinance at lower interest rates. The best proposal came from Kitsap Bank based in Port Orchard, Washington, which offered a fully amortized loan running through June 2035 that Ulbricht said would ultimately save the agency around \$550,000.

The new loan agreement with Kitsap Bank will cost the Port

around \$110,000 a year, Ulbricht said, versus around \$150,000 a year with Lewis & Clark. The agreement will also remove a lien on the building used as collateral, he said.

"The bank you're getting the funding from is taking just your promise to pay — no bank fees, no loan fees, no appraisal fees, no deeds,

See Port, Page A6



7 29467 20121 7