



INSIDE

Astorian

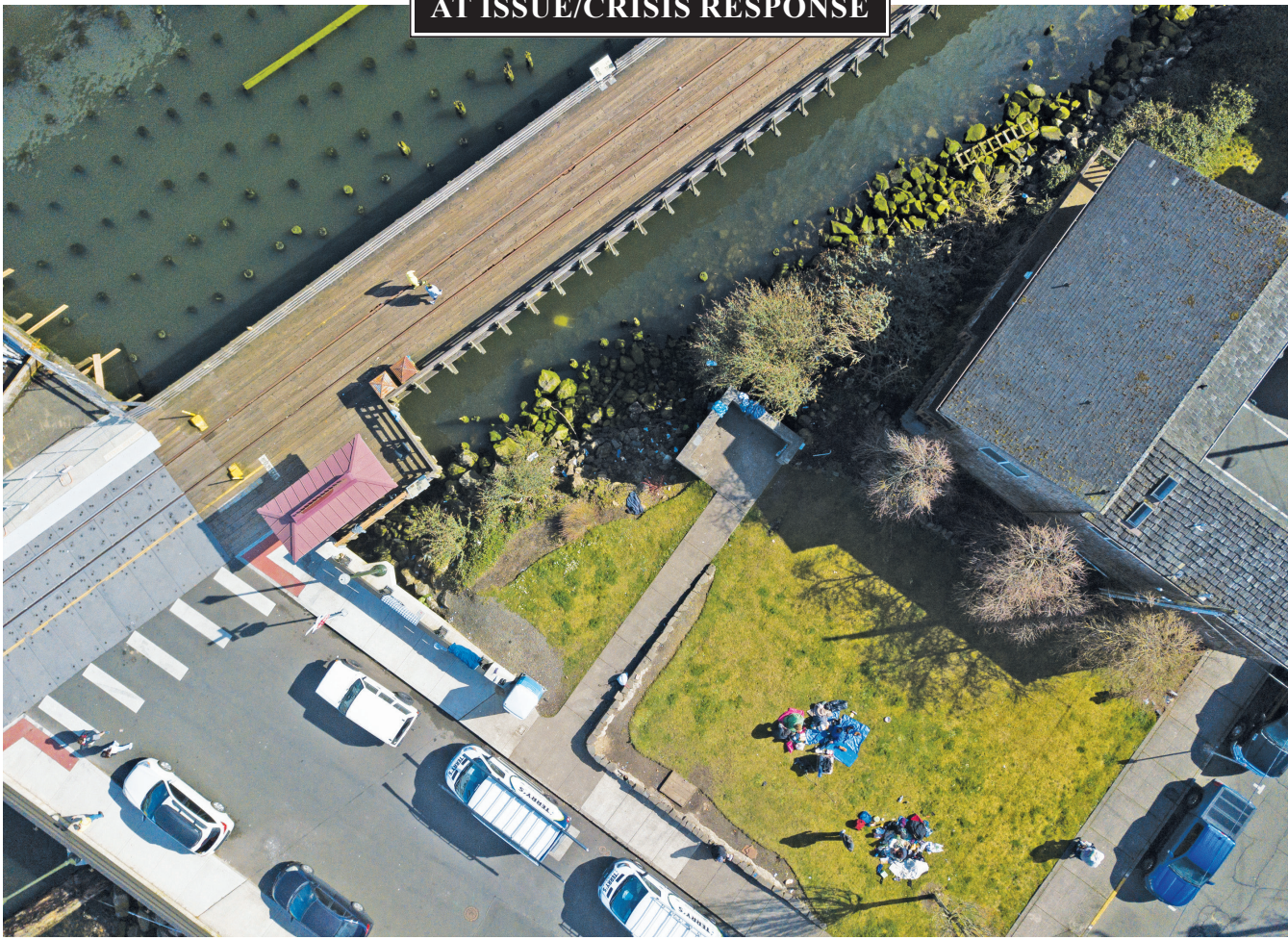
148TH YEAR, NO. 123

DailyAstorian.com // TUESDAY, APRIL 13, 2021

\$1.50

CORONAVIRUS

AT ISSUE/CRISIS RESPONSE



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

There were 470 police calls to the park at Ninth and Astor streets in 2020.

Police feel weight of crisis response

A small number of people account for hundreds of police calls

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

Sixteen people accounted for nearly 600 calls to the Astoria Police Department last year.

Many involved drinking in public, emotional outbursts, fighting, welfare checks, abandoned junk and trespassing. They often shared the common threads of homelessness, mental illness and drug and alcohol abuse.

While most of the calls did not lead to arrests, court appearances or jail time, they placed a significant burden on police.

As Clatsop County and cities consider ways to provide housing and improve access to mental health and substance abuse treatment, police officers are asked to respond to recurring calls involving the same people in crisis.

“Our traditional options are very limited. So we end up doing the same thing over and over again and getting the same result, which is no result,” Astoria Police Chief Geoff Spalding said.

“It’s not necessarily the fault of the system, it’s just the system isn’t funded to the extent it should be,” he said. “It’s a huge challenge for us. If you were to take those (16) individuals and be able to address their behavior through whatever system you needed to use, and we could do that effectively and eliminate

See At Issue, Page A6



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

AT ISSUE/CRISIS RESPONSE

Police officers are repeatedly asked to respond to the same people in crisis, placing a burden on time and resources.

The Astorian asked the Astoria Police Department and others about the impact.

Let us know what you think in a letter to the editor: bit.ly/2kuTOPZ

‘OUR TRADITIONAL OPTIONS ARE VERY LIMITED. SO WE END UP DOING THE SAME THING OVER AND OVER AGAIN AND GETTING THE SAME RESULT, WHICH IS NO RESULT.’

Astoria Police Chief Geoff Spalding

Leaders weigh fate of urban renewal revenue

Money was initially planned for a conference center

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Astorian

Astoria leaders are looking at whether to direct more than \$800,000 in taxes toward urban renewal projects or back to the local jurisdictions that contribute the revenue.

The City Council, in its role as the Astoria Development Commission, created the Astor West Urban Renewal District in 2002 to fund improvement projects from the Astoria Bridge to Smith Point, namely a conference center.

The conference center idea was eventually scrapped. But the urban renewal district has funded such projects as moving a flagpole near the Maritime Memorial Park, extending the Astoria Riverwalk through the Port of Astoria to Pier 3 and renovating the Red Building near the Astoria Bridge into a commercial complex and meeting space. It also funds grants for business owners wanting to improve their facades.

See Taxes, Page A2

Vaccine outreach planned for the homeless

Event will focus on wellness

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Astorian

In an effort to get coronavirus vaccinations to the homeless, Clatsop Community Action will hold a wellness event in Astoria this month.

The homeless became eligible to receive the vaccine in March, part of a group that included seafood and agricultural workers, as well as people displaced by wildfires. But they are one of the more challenging populations to reach.

The wellness event is set for April 29 at the Astoria Armory. Clatsop Community Action hopes to attract about 50 people and will be offering the single-dose

See Vaccine, Page A6

MORE INSIDE

County reports new virus cases • A6

An avid gardener helps others grow

Wentzel leads master gardeners

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Astorian

One of Julia Wentzel’s earliest memories of a garden is her grandfather’s potato patch.

It still seems like witchcraft, or a magician’s box of mysteries,



the soil below and the leafy plant above and in the middle, suddenly, a tumbling pile of actual potatoes.

“Honestly, to this day I try to use root vegetables as the gateway drug into gardening,” Wentzel said.

For people who may not have

been as in touch with where their food comes from, there are few things as educational or delightful as pulling up familiar food like a bright orange carrot or a ruby red beet in a place that might feel very unfamiliar: the dirt of a garden bed.

Wentzel is the new master gardener and small-farms program coordinator on the coast for the Oregon State University Extension Service. Based in Tillamook, she splits her time between Tillamook County and Clatsop County.

See Wentzel, Page A6



Broken Banjo Photography

Julia Wentzel is the new coordinator for Oregon State University Extension's Master Gardener program.



7 29467 20121 7