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Park district hopefuls appear at forum

Transparency, finances among the issues

By KATHERINE LACAZE
For The Astorian

SEASIDE — Candidates for the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District met at a forum Thursday night to discuss their thoughts on transparency, the controversial purchase of the former Broadway Middle School building and other pressing issues facing the board.

The forum, hosted by the Seaside Signal and the American Association of University Women Seaside Chapter at the Bob Chisholm Community Center, featured the park district's five directors and their five challengers.

While those vying to unseat the board have frequently appeared together in campaign materials and echo many of the same concerns about the park district, they maintain that they're not necessarily running as a coalition, but as individuals with distinct ideas and skill sets.

"I would not say there's one philosophy that we all agree with completely," said John Huisman, who is running against board member Celeste Bodner. "We all have different things we're interested in pursuing."

Based on Huisman's comments during the forum, the main issue for him is the state of the Sunset Pool, which he claims has gone downhill since 2016.

"It used to be a crown jewel in this town and it's not anymore," he said. "The stewardship on the part of this board of directors toward that pool is simply lacking."

Jackie Evans, who is running against board member Erika Marshall-Hamer, agreed she was displeased with the state of the pool, adding the board should "always make sure there is pride in the staff, pride of ownership and pride within the membership."

For the other three challengers — Patrick Duhachek, Stephen Morrison and Al Hernandez — a perceived lack of transparency and financial mismanagement are the sticking points.

Hernandez, who is running against board member Su Coddington, claims there are too often mistakes or omissions in financial documents, going so far as to suggest board members are "hiding" something. He also brought up concerns about the board adding line items during meetings and not following parliamentary procedure.

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COLLEGE BOARD RACES FOCUS ON ENROLLMENT

ZONE 2, POSITION 3



Robert Duehmig



Trudy Van Dusen Citovic

ZONE 2, POSITION 2



Sara Meyer



Patrick Preston

ZONE 3, POSITION 6



David Zunkel



Suzanne Iverson

Challenges to rebound from the pandemic

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Astorian

Enrollment is at the heart of the May election for the Clatsop Community College Board of Education.

The three candidates vying to unseat incumbents believe concrete plans and on-the-ground outreach are needed to rebuild student numbers and the community's trust in a world severely altered by the coronavirus pandemic. All three said they were asked to run by people in the community, including college board member Tim Lyman.

But the incumbents argue that institutional knowledge and proven experience working with the college's president, faculty, staff and programs are needed more than ever as the college figures out what role it will play in a post-pandemic landscape.

The pandemic hit Oregon's community colleges hard. Across the state, two-year institutions saw a drop in enrollment as colleges pivoted abruptly to online instruction or figured out how to offer a combination of online and in-person learning. Meanwhile, many students who lost jobs because of the pandemic or who struggled to work from home while also juggling child care and other concerns put their education on hold.

Clatsop Community College lost more than half of its student population last fall, according to state data. Across Oregon, community colleges saw similar declines. Clatsop lost a number of students because of pandemic-related restrictions and decisions by outside agencies and groups and expects to see many of these students return.

See College board, Page A6

Three competitive races for college board are on the ballot in the May election.

Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian



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County reports new virus cases • A2

County hits pause on citizen advisory groups

A review of the comprehensive plan

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

Clatsop County commissioners have agreed to indefinitely pause community involvement in the comprehensive plan update, prompting questions from volunteers who have worked on the project over the past two years.

The comprehensive plan is the long-term vision for the county and sets planning policies that guide

land use, recreation, transportation, natural resources and housing. The plan has not been updated since its original adoption in 1979.

The update started in June 2019 with six citizen advisory committees representing the county's land use planning areas and a countywide advisory committee. The committees have covered eight of 18 goals, with the expectation of completing the review by December.

County commissioners have raised concerns about the slow pace of the committees' work and want to simplify and expedite the process. There have also been concerns about some of the ideas coming out of the committee meetings.

"I think one of the most crucial areas and observations that we've



Danny Miller/The Astorian

Clatsop County is updating its comprehensive plan.

seen as a staff is what is coming out of the committees in terms

of how it relates to what is possible under state statute and what

we believe to be the broad direction and how they would like the planning process to proceed moving forward and what their expectations are for the committee members," Gail Henrikson, the county's community development director, told commissioners during a work session in April.

"And so we see a lot of aspirational goals that are being put forward by the committees, but also realizing that a lot of those aspirational goals just will not be able to be included in the final plan simply because they're not permitted by state statute is one of the big issues that we've seen over the past year as we've gone through this process."

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