



INSIDE

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CORONAVIRUS

County renews focus on disaster preparedness

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

With a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake and tsunami on the horizon, Clatsop County has taken steps to protect residents and tourists from catastrophe.

The county has completed the Tsunami Wayfinding Project, which inventoried evacuation signs and identified where additional signs were needed.

The county is also planning to relocate its public works facility out of the tsunami inundation zone — an initiative formerly known as the Resiliency Project, which had included establishing alternative evacuation routes around vulnerable parts of U.S. Highway 101 and U.S. Highway 30.

The alternative routes were put on the back burner, however, after backlash from residents in Lewis and Clark who live along a road that the county identified as an option.

In 2019, the county received a transportation and growth management grant through the state to develop a tsunami evacuation facility improvement plan. The plan will focus on tying walking and cycling trails into evacuation routes and identifying gaps.

Parametrix, a consulting group in Portland leading the project, presented the plan and solicited feedback from the public during a virtual open house last week.

“We’re talking about a very serious and substantial event that could occur tomorrow or 200 years from now,” Ryan Farncomb, a senior planner and project manager at Parametrix, said. “So it could be difficult to make the case to folks the need for improving evacuation facilities or thinking about this. And so by tying this work to recreational facilities — trails which people could use every single day — I think we’re really setting the county up for making improvements in the near term after this plan is done.”

Gail Henrikson, the county’s com-



Photos by Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

ABOVE: Evacuation plans for Fort Stevens State Park are part of the discussion on disaster preparedness. **BELOW:** Clatsop County hopes to improve evacuation routes to better prepare for an earthquake and tsunami.

LEARN MORE

People can access a virtual open house and fill out an online survey until May 24 at www.ClatsopTEFIP.org

munity development director, said the work ties in and can build off efforts the county’s emergency management staff has completed, like the wayfinding project and the natural hazards mitigation plan.

“We’re really focused on the coastal areas in unincorporated Clatsop County, but are also looking at the interconnections with the incorporated areas,” Henrikson said.

The project is looking at Arch Cape, Clatsop Plains, Fort Stevens State Park and the Miles Crossing and Jeffers Garden area.

“What we did in this initial exercise, is we looked at the existing evacuation system, existing assembly areas — which again are those places that

people are supposed to head to during an emergency — and then also looked at a lot of environmental information, including things like where are there streams, rivers and wetlands,” Farncomb said. “And also, where are there landslides or bridges that are maybe over land of concern.”

“We looked at all of this information at once to be able to understand what are the risks to existing evacuation routes, what are the opportunities and where are there trails already on the ground that could be used for evacuation.”

Farncomb said there is substantial landslide risk in many areas along the coast, as well as liquefaction risk, especially north of Gearhart.

“The area of greatest evacuation needs overall is that Clatsop Plains area north of Gearhart all the way to Fort Stevens State Park,” he said. “There are many neighborhoods there that lack east-west access to higher ground.”

See Preparedness, Page A6

High risk level remains

Brown sets new threshold for vaccinations

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

Clatsop County will remain at high risk for the coronavirus on Friday, along with most other Oregon counties.

Gov. Kate Brown on Tuesday announced plans to lift most risk level restrictions statewide once 70% of Oregonians 16 and older receive their first vaccine doses against the virus.

Beginning May 21, counties will also have the option of moving to lower risk once 65% of people 16 and older have received at least one dose. Counties that do not have at least 65% of their population vaccinated will return to a two-week cycle for evaluating risk.

“Thanks to you, Oregon, it looks like we’ve crossed the tipping point of

See Risk level, Page A6

MORE INSIDE

County reports new virus cases • A6

SEASIDE

Faith leaders focus on homeless

Forums planned to discuss options

By R.J. MARX
The Astorian

SEASIDE — Faith leaders came together last week at the Seaside Civic and Convention Center to discuss the city’s rise in homelessness.

“We need to learn about what’s going on in our town. We need to learn from each other,” said City Councilor Tita Montero, an organizer of the event. “And we need to perk up the ideas, because what might work in one town may not work in Seaside. But we aren’t going to know that if we haven’t had the chance to bat that around a little bit.”

See Homeless, Page A6



Grace period on rent extended

Tenants get more time during pandemic

By PETER WONG
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Gov. Kate Brown’s signature awaits a bill that gives tenants more time to pay past-due rent stemming from the coronavirus

pandemic and protects their future ability to rent.

The state House sent Senate Bill 282 to the governor on a 39-17 vote on Tuesday.

Tosha Morgan-Platt, who lives in Portland with three children, one of them with disabilities, was among the tenants who submitted testimony in favor of the bill. She lost her job during the economic downturn that resulted from the pandemic more than a year ago, and subsequent work has not helped her earn enough to eliminate \$3,000 in past-due rent.

The bill allows Morgan-Platt and others an extended grace period until Feb. 28 — instead of June 30 — to pay past-due rent going back to April 1, 2020. It does not forgive any rent, and it requires renters to be current on payments after July 1. But it would extend until Feb. 28 a moratorium on evictions for nonpayment of rent during the pandemic.

“This is a huge weight off my shoulders and will give me or my landlord enough time to apply for



R.J. Marx/The Astorian

See Rent, Page A6

State lawmakers gave tenants until February to pay past-due rent.

