

IN BRIEF

Warrenton approves restrictions on vacation rentals, marijuana businesses

WARRENTON — The City Commission approved code changes Tuesday night restricting single-family homes in residential areas from being turned into vacation rentals.

Nonowner occupied vacation rentals will be allowed in commercial zones, but not in residential zones. Homestay lodging will be permitted in residential zones as long as the owner or representative lives on the property and is available 24/7.

The City Commission also tightened requirements on marijuana businesses by approving changes to city code requiring the businesses to go through a conditional use process.

Commissioners agreed to continue only allowing marijuana businesses to be built in industrial zones on the east side of U.S. Highway 101.

Astoria police call bomb squad after finding suspicious device

Astoria police called the Oregon State Police bomb squad Tuesday after a suspicious device was located on W. Marine Drive.

A police officer was in the 400 block at about 9 a.m. when someone threw a smoking metallic device into the center of one of the eastbound lanes.

The bomb squad arrived at about noon and removed the object from the roadway. Officials say the inside of the casing was likely a lithium laptop battery that had undergone a reaction.

Coast Guard medevacs fisherman off Tillamook Bay

The U.S. Coast Guard medevaced a 19-year-old fisherman Tuesday about 25 miles west of Tillamook Bay.

Officials say the captain aboard the 38-foot commercial fishing vessel, Joseph, called the Coast Guard at about 1:40 p.m. reporting that a crew member was experiencing intense fatigue, difficulty breathing and losing feeling in his hands and feet.

A Coast Guard aircrew arrived at about 2:40 p.m. and hoisted the fisherman to shore. He was reportedly in stable condition and taken to Columbia Memorial Hospital in Astoria.

— The Astorian

Ilwaco gets \$2M stormwater grant

ILWACO, Wash. — The Ilwaco City Council authorized Mayor Gary Forner to enter into an agreement with the Washington State Department of Ecology in late April, securing nearly \$2 million in grant funds for a stormwater improvement project along Baker Bay.

The \$1.8 million grant for the project is in addition to the city's required 15% match of \$325,000, which comes via a natural resource damage assessment settlement the city received following a December 2014 oil spill caused by the sinking of a crab boat that crashed into Jetty A just outside of the bay.

The \$2.1 million project came together in the aftermath of the oil spill, with the intent of decreasing stormwater pollution discharge to the bay. The project was proposed by a group comprising the city, the Port of Ilwaco and the Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership.

Fire damages Lost Roo in Long Beach

LONG BEACH, Wash. — A popular Long Beach restaurant was spared serious damage after catching fire Monday evening.

The fire at the Lost Roo on Pacific Avenue, reported around 6:30 p.m., generated a quick response from several local fire departments.

Damage to the business was mainly confined to the back kitchen area. It was initially suspected that the fire started in a dryer, which was loaded with towels.

The charred, front-loading dryer was removed out the back door by firemen, along with armloads of scorched linens.

Lost Roo owners Tania and Travis Miller were nearby and responded to the scene, along with curious onlookers. The restaurant was closed at the time.

— Chinook Observer

DEATH

May 9, 2021

JACOBS, Jeanne Laurel, 72, of Seaside, died in Seaside. Caldwell's Funeral & Cremation Arrangement Center of Seaside is in charge of the arrangements.

MEMORIAL

Saturday, May 15

JAY, Craig Scott — Memorial at 2 p.m., First Baptist Church of Astoria, 349 Seventh St.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

THURSDAY

Seaside Civic and Convention Center Commission, 5 p.m., 415 First Ave.

Warrenton Planning Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 225 S. Main Ave.

Hospital reaches contract with 450 workers

Talks produce three-year agreement

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Astorian

Columbia Memorial Hospital has agreed to a new three-year contract with around 450 workers represented by the Service Employees International Union Local 49.

The union covers a wide array of positions at the Astoria hospital, including pharmacists, respiratory therapists, speech pathologists, certified nursing assistants, medical assistants, dietitians and housekeepers.

The negotiations went relatively smoothly compared to a labor dispute lasting several months between the hospital and the Oregon Nurses Association. The negotiations involved pickets, marches and the threat of a strike before a mediator helped broker a new contract in late 2019 between the hospital and about 120 nurses.



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Columbia Memorial Hospital reached a new three-year contract with around 450 employees represented by the Service Employees International Union.

Lonn Martin, a housekeeper in the surgical department and chief shop steward for the service employees union, said the hospital was mindful of concerns members of his union had brought up during the protracted negotiations with nurses. The new contract included wage increases, additional paid time off, maintained health benefits and increased support for professional development.

"The gains certainly were

the wages, and the SEIU education fund, which should give a greater pathway to our members for their education, as far as what is required for their certifications, their licensure and their continuing education," Martin said.

Nicole Williams, the chief operating officer for the hospital, said in a statement that the hospital is pleased with the contract and to be a part of the union's education fund.

"Tuition reimbursement for college courses and (con-

tinuing education), career counseling and programs to qualify members for much-needed health care positions make this a win-win situation for both the SEIU 49 caregivers and CMH," she said.

Staffing became a flashpoint for hospital employees at the outset of the coronavirus pandemic, when around 80 members of the service employees union were laid off. Employees rallied on Exchange Street in June, calling on the hospital to use federal support to bring workers back. The hospital was at 682 employees as of Monday, down from 714 in December 2019.

"This is the only SEIU worksite that laid off 80 people during the course of the pandemic," Martin said. "We have not fully returned all those individuals to staff. That remains ... an ongoing concern, an ongoing discussion and some of the barriers with regards to making sure we have enough staff onboard. Because some of the classifications are kind of at a minimum right now, and we need more people."

Program puts a bounty on fish in Washington state

By KRISTIAN FODEN-VENCIL

Oregon Public Broadcasting

At the Columbia Point boat ramp in Richland, Washington, retired firefighter Fred Ness brings a half dozen pikeminnow to the Northern Pikeminnow Sport-Reward Program to get them measured and counted.

"I had a good friend that was doing it, and I thought 'Well, I'll try it,'" he said. "One thing led to another, and here I am: I'm addicted to it now."

To the untrained eye, a pikeminnow looks a lot like a small salmon. It can live for a decade or more and reach a couple of feet in length. It's also native to the Pacific Northwest.

But the most important thing to know about pikeminnow, at least for the purpose of Ness' fishing habit and this story, is their diet: They eat baby salmon and steelhead. Lots of them. That makes them enemy number one for the Bonneville Power Administration, which spends millions of dollars trying to help young salmon reach the sea.

Bonneville has decided pikeminnow pose a big threat, enough to justify putting a bounty on their slimy little heads. This year, a handful of new temporary stations are being added to encourage more people to take part.

"I'm getting better all the time," Ness said. "But believe me, there's a trick to it. There are people who out-fish me when I'm fishing two feet from them. They have it, and I don't."

The folks who make \$20,000, \$50,000 or even \$100,000 a season use extra sensitive — extra expensive — fishing tackle. They even develop their own secret bait recipes featuring fish guts, salmon eggs and other messy stuff.

Ness has tried cheese balls, chicken liver and Mormon crickets, but admits he lacks the finesse to feel a pikeminnow as it picks at his bait. He finds it difficult to know when to quickly pull the line and set the hook.

"They're hard to catch," he said. "They just nibble, a very tender and delicate bite on the small ones."

Anglers who are serious about making money on the pikeminnow program tend not to share their secret recipes or favorite fishing holes.

"Believe me," said Ness, "there are some serious fishermen that would probably, if you anchored next to them, pull up and go somewhere else until you left and then they'd come back and re-anchor."

He said anglers are good friends for the most part. But that edge of competition is never far away.



Photos by Kristian Foden-Vencil/Oregon Public Broadcasting

TOP: Eric Winther heads the pikeminnow program with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. He says a lot of people thought they could make a lot of money fishing pikeminnow but it isn't that easy to do. ABOVE: Northern pikeminnow brought in to the Columbia Point boat ramp in Richland.

At 67, Ness doesn't have a significant other, so he's on the water at 5 a.m. almost every day, and will be for the next five months of the season.

Last year he made \$1,300. His boat cost him \$20,000, so he doesn't expect to make back his investment any time soon.

"There's people that I know that will stay out 24 hours," he said. "They'll come in. Check-in their fish. They'll regroup and then go back out."

Anglers have to come in after 24 hours because the program is strict about counting only fresh fish. For the last three years, that's been the job of Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife scientific technician Britney Salter. She runs the station near the Columbia Point boat ramp, measuring and counting pikeminnow.

"Sometimes they come in, and they're still alive, like these ones here, flopping around," she said. "And another identifier that I've learned is if they've been frozen for any period of time, they'll just not look fresh, and they'll also have a blue sheen to them sometimes."

She's on the lookout for pikeminnow that have been caught and frozen. They've usually come from streams and lakes far away from the main stem of the Columbia and Snake rivers.

"After each fish I also have to clip the tail fin, just to make sure nobody sneaks

by, maybe grabs the fish out of the cooler when I'm not here," she said. "Then every fish is going to go through the scanner to scan for PIT tags."

APIT tag, or Passive Integrated Transponder tag, is a chip that scientists have put into a fish to collect information. Anglers who catch a fish with one can make \$100 or \$500, depending on the tag. But anglers are mainly paid per fish: \$5 each if they catch less than 25, and \$8 each if they catch more than 200. The system favors volume — so 10% of those fishing end up with 80% of the money.

"I've actually had anglers that will come and park at the end of the parking lot and wait for every other angler to turn in their fish before they arrive, because they don't want anyone following them," Salter said. "They don't want them to know where they were fishing. They don't want anybody to listen to their conversation or see how many fish they're turning in either."

Anglers also have to tell Salter where they've been fishing, and all that information is sent to biologists who check on the pikeminnow population — a good year will see about 19% caught. The information is then conglomerated and made available at pikeminnow.org. The most anyone has ever made in a season is \$119,000.

"A lot of folks in the early years would go out, they'd

want to make their millions and they'd find out it's not that easy," said Eric Winther, the head of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife pikeminnow program. "But they'd find out they could go out to lake 'so-and-so' and catch a bunch of them. And so that's really where ... fraud kind of came in."

Authorities may also get suspicious if a newcomer turns up with a lot of fish. An angler could even be "green slipped," meaning a biologist would interview them and maybe go and see where they're fishing.

Winther said fraud isn't such a problem now as regulators have set up several checks and protocols to verify an angler's catch.

But the whole idea of encouraging anglers to catch one native species over another strikes Jeremy FiveCrows, of the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, as odd.

"It's just kind of curious that the one that they have this reward system on is for the native fish, and really not the small mouth bass, the walleye and largemouth bass ... that are also in the system that are non-native," he said.

Winther said there's already a whole sports fishery network set up to catch bass and walleye, so they don't need to pay anglers to catch them. Pikeminnow, in contrast, are bony and hard to eat.

"There's no real demand, no market for it," he said. "So outside of paying people for it, there's no way to really catch and exploit those fish. They are the main fish predator of baby salmon and steelhead. Studies show they take about 78% of all the smolts that are eaten by fish are taken by pikeminnow."

Back on the river, retired iron worker Ted Rydstrom fishes two or three days a week for bass and walleye — not pikeminnow. "I really don't know how, or taken an interest in how they fish for them," he said. "I've caught them before, when I've been trolling for walleye ... just not that much fun."

He said they don't put up much of a fight.

Anyone who wants to spend their summer on the water, making money and saving salmon, can sign up for the pikeminnow program.

Just know the preferred bait for some this year are Mormon crickets. They can be bought in tins. But for fresh, take a few friends to a shrubby steppe area, form a large circle and herd the crickets into the middle. They can be caught by hand or with a butterfly net.

But expert anglers say you should wear gloves. Unlike the easy-to-catch pikeminnow, this bait can bite and draw blood.

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