



Photos by Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

A photo of Vincent Tadei's family at the house in the early 1900s hangs on the wall.

Views: Commissioners weigh protections

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a deal was reached. Stemper said he wants an amicable ending with the Tadei family, but has maintained that the church is within its rights to develop the property.

"If LUBA sides with them, we'll cure the deficiency and continue forward," Stemper said. "But LUBA's not going to side with them, in my opinion, because we meet all the codes and criteria of the city of Astoria. View is not part of the code."

Regulating views

Members of the Tadei family argue that while the Riverfront Vision Plan created by the city has protected views and minimized development on the water, historic properties like theirs south of Highway 30 in Uppertown have not been provided the same protections.

Peter Tadei, a commercial real estate agent, recalled the proposed Fairfield Inn and Suites off Second Street. The four-story hotel, since denied building permit extensions by the City Council, spawned amendments to city code that shrank the allowed height and mass of buildings on the waterfront to

protect views.

"How is it OK for everybody to shout down the hotel, but when it comes to the Tadeis' house, there's not such a concern by City Council, by (the Historic Landmarks Commission)?" he said. "Nobody seems to be ready to stand on our side of that issue."

After the church annex application was continued, Planning Commissioner Sean Fitzpatrick noted the lack of language concerning development that could block the view of an existing property.

"With the Riverfront Vision Plan, virtually all of the discussion focused on the loss of views," he said. "I think that maybe it's something that ought to be explored."

Daryl Moore, the president of the Planning Commission, said there has been a long history of property owners assuming their views are protected, getting

angered when they realize they aren't and wondering why the city does nothing.

Commissioner Brooklyn Henri called the discussion timely, given the red-hot real estate market and the importance of views to property value.

"I think we have a responsibility to help people protect their property



Bethany Free Lutheran Church has faced opposition from some neighbors over plans to develop a 5,000-square-foot annex on this plot of land.

values, or at least have some way to address it, if it comes up as a concern," she said.

Commissioner Chris Womack cautioned that the city needs to balance the value of a view versus the value of a property that should be buildable based on city code and zoning rules. But a majority of planning commissioners showed interest in asking the City Council and Estes whether they should discuss codifying the value of viewsheds.

A complex process

Asked about the issue later, Estes cautioned that such a process could prove complex, time-consuming and expensive, given that most of Astoria is built on a hillside with views. City staff has already been over-

whelmed with other City Council priorities, development reviews and code amendments, budgeting for a new planner in the coming year to help meet the demand.

Estes also questioned whether protecting viewsheds citywide would hinder efforts to develop more affordable housing. View protections in other cities have often been enacted in high-end, affluent neighborhoods and resulted in expensive legal challenges, he said.

"One that I can think of specifically is in the Puget Sound and Seattle where there were lawsuits between neighbors over this whole issue," Estes said. "I would ask that if these are set up in a similar situation in Astoria, would we have a similar set of circumstances?"

County changes virus reporting

Virus case count posted on website

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

Clatsop County will no longer issue daily news releases that detail demographic information on new coronavirus cases.

The county has been publicly disclosing virus cases locally since the start of the pandemic, providing the age range, sex and whether the individual lives in the northern or southern part of the county.

Moving forward, the county will post the number of new local cases reported by the Oregon Health

Authority on the COVID-19 Public Information Hub on the county's website. The total number of cases, hospitalizations and deaths will also be listed.

"The Public Health Department has been reporting every local positive COVID-19 case since the first one in March 2020," the county said in a statement. "The department's approach to the pandemic is shifting from an emergency response to managing COVID cases within the context of updated guidance and the ongoing vaccination campaign."

A spokesman for the county said any noteworthy changes or trends in local

virus cases will be disclosed as they occur.

The information hub includes data from the health authority on testing, vaccinations, outbreaks and hospitalizations.

At several points during the pandemic, the county's local virus case count did not match the Oregon Health Authority's count, leading to some public confusion, since case counts help determine the county's risk level and the extent of government restrictions to contain the virus.

Over the past year, The Astorian has pressed the county to disclose more demographic information about virus cases, a breakdown of virus cases by zip

code and workplace outbreaks that have the potential to lead to dozens or hundreds of new virus cases.

The county has declined to disclose more detailed information, citing patient privacy concerns, a state law that gives the county and the state discretion on what information to release during disease outbreaks and demands on county staff.

The change in the county's virus reporting policy comes as the county surpassed 1,000 cases.

As of Friday, the county has recorded 1,003 virus cases since the pandemic began. According to the county, 25 were hospitalized and eight have died.

Extension: 'Everyone deserves a warm, safe, dry place to call home'

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moratorium, which applied to all properties, HB 2009 applies only to five residential properties per owner. Each property can contain no more than four units. Commercial property is excluded.

The renewal aligns with the June deadline for a moratorium announced in February by the Federal Housing Finance Agency, which regulates the federally backed mortgages that account for about 70% of all mortgages in Oregon.

The state bill would empower Brown to renew the state moratorium for up to two more quarters, but only if she gives advance notice of her orders.

Any foreclosures initiated during the emergency period are stayed.

According to the Household Pulse Survey by the U.S. Census Bureau in March, an estimated 65,000 Oregon households were behind on their mortgages.

Congress approved mortgage assistance in Decem-

ber that will result in an estimated \$40 million for Oregon, and its approval of President Joe Biden's pandemic recovery plan in March will make available up to \$100 million more for Oregon.

The Senate version also limits the exemptions for lenders to take part in the Oregon Foreclosure Avoidance Program. The current exemption applies to lenders that initiated less than 175 foreclosures in the prior year. The bill now applies the exemption only to lenders that, for 2021 and 2022, initiated less than 30 foreclosures in 2019.

On Wednesday, Brown signed a bill into law that extends the payment of past-due rent until Feb. 28.

"Everyone deserves a warm, safe, dry place to call home — and during the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been particularly critical that Oregonians be able to stay in their homes," the governor said in a statement.

The Oregon Capital Bureau is a collaboration between EO Media Group and Pamplin Media Group.



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Marysol Ochoa records a video of herself as Audrey Knippa gives her the COVID-19 vaccine at the Clatsop County Fairgrounds.

Risk: Vaccinated people could win cash rewards

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governor announced a return to a two-week cycle for risk level changes.

Had the state continued the one-week cycle, Clatsop County would have qualified to move from high risk to moderate risk on Friday. Risk level updates will instead be announced by the state on Tuesday and take effect on May 28.

"The warning week has been an excellent tool to give businesses time to prepare for complying with the requirements of a higher risk level," Astoria Mayor Bruce Jones said in a letter to the governor on Thursday. "At this stage in the pandemic recovery it is eminently reasonable and prudent to eliminate the warning week for counties meeting the criteria for moving to a lower risk level. Warning weeks should only apply for counties moving to a higher risk level."

"I can find no risk-based rationale for keeping Clatsop County at high risk for this additional length of time. It is an unnecessary burden on our community and businesses."

The Astoria-Warrenton Area Chamber of Commerce and Warrenton Mayor Henry Balensifer shared their support of the letter with the governor's office.

Meanwhile, the state on Friday announced it is on track to vaccinate 70% of adult Oregonians before the end of June and lift most virus restrictions. The governor said vaccination rates continue to rise and that hospitalizations for the virus are at their lowest since April.

"Every single day, we are getting closer to ending this chapter of the pandemic," Brown said in a press conference. "With summer just around the corner and life starting to return to nor-

mal, I think we're all feeling excited and hopeful that good days lie ahead. But we aren't there just yet. In this final push to reach every Oregonian with a vaccine and to meet our goal of at least 70% of adults vaccinated so we can fully reopen our economy, we will need to pull on every lever we have."

As an additional incentive for people who have not yet received their first dose of a vaccine, the governor announced the "Take Your Shot Oregon" campaign, an opportunity for one person to win a \$1 million grand prize, and one person in each of Oregon's 36 counties to win \$10,000.

All people 18 years and older who have had at least one dose will be eligible for the prizes funded through federal relief money. The state will draw the winners on June 28.

Students will also be eligible for five \$100,000 scholarships through the Oregon College Savings Plan.

As of Friday, 34,213 doses have been administered in Clatsop County and 15,953 people were fully vaccinated. The county's goal to reach herd immunity against the virus is vaccinating 27,533 people, or 70% of the population.

Counties where 65% of people 16 and older have received at least one dose were given the option to move into lower risk on Friday. The 65% mark is a way for counties to return to more normal operations ahead of the state's herd immunity goal.

As of Thursday, 59% of county residents 16 and older had received at least one dose. The county said it needs about 1,900 more first doses to reach the 65% threshold and move into lower risk for the virus.

Fireworks: Display to be 'higher than ever before'

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David Reid, the chamber's executive director, said in a statement.

The fireworks display will begin at 10 p.m. It will be set near downtown, on a Columbia River barge. Spectators will be able to social distance from other groups and see the show from various spots throughout the city.

"Our goal is to celebrate

our community with this long-standing and beloved tradition to help return to some semblance of normalcy while keeping the public safe," Dorn said.

The show will be displayed "higher than ever before" to allow for more viewers and less crowding along the Astoria Riverwalk. Ohana Media Group will play patriotic music throughout the show.

"We have talked with

regional and state leadership about the show and how best to provide a safe experience. By offering a public display, we hope to cut down on personal fireworks displays, which become a fire and safety hazard on our beaches as well," Reid said.

Fireworks are prohibited in state parks and beaches in Oregon. Locally, fireworks are also banned in Cannon Beach, per a City Council decision made in 2020.



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian
Red, white and blue fireworks spatter the sky over Astoria.