



Barrels and flowers sit in the parklet at Blaylock's Whiskey Bar.

Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Parklets: Three approved in Astoria

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There are three approved parklets in Astoria, all operated by businesses running out of small spaces that felt cozy pre-pandemic but that struggled to serve customers once indoor seating was restricted or not allowed at all.

One of the parklets, operated by Green Door Cafe on 10th Street, will move down the street to be more directly in front of the business. The new location is above underground water lines, something previously not allowed.

To offer the exception, city staff added new rules later approved by the City Council. The cafe's owners, Wade Padgett and Kendall Padgett-McEuen — and anyone who wants a parklet that goes over city utility lines — must ensure each component of the parklet weighs less than 50 pounds and can be moved by one person in case of an emergency.

For the Green Door Cafe, the additional outdoor seating is crucial. The tiny cafe could not accommodate customers indoors under most of the ever-shifting pandemic guidelines, Padgett-McEuen said.

Parking

When the first parklet popped up in 2015 — a parklet outside of the Cargo store on 11th Street

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City Manager Brett Estes

that is now under code enforcement proceedings with the city — some people were upset that it took away parking spaces.

As in nearly every other tourist-reliant city on the North Coast, parking — or the perceived lack of it — is an enduring complaint in downtown Astoria.

In 2018, the city and the Astoria Downtown Historic District Association launched a parking study. But months ahead of pandemic shutdowns, the study concluded that though there may be trouble finding parking at certain times of day — during peak restaurant hours, for instance — and in certain pockets of the city, there are plenty of spots to go around.

When the city opened the door to more parklets during the pandemic, at least one person called to complain, City Manager Brett Estes said.

But both the city and the downtown association said they recognized a need to weigh everything in balance. Parklets might take away parking spots, but restaurants and bars needed outdoor options if they were to survive.

Blaylock's Whiskey Bar sits in a strange little intersection off Exchange Street, at the tip of a triangle that includes Bridge & Tunnel Bottleshop and Taproom, a collection of food trucks, and Reach Break Brewing and Rev-eille Ciderworks. Farther up the road is Fort George Brewery and the Blue Scorcher Bakery & Cafe. It is an area that can quickly fill up with cars and people. The bare-bones parklet in front of Blaylock's takes over a front-row parking spot.

But Angilletta said he has heard zero complaints about parking.

Parks hasn't heard any complaints, either. Brut Wine Bar is in a quieter area, though Merry Time Bar & Grill is right across the street.

Parking questions aside, Estes wonders if, on the other side of the pandemic, people will have become used to seeing parklets, maybe even preferring them for seating. Perhaps, the parklets will have won over people who had doubts.

"I think it's going to be interesting after things really start getting back to normal," he said.

Weber: Allocated funds may or may not cover all the project costs

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Astoria City Manager Brett Estes said if the federal funding comes through, he hopes it would enable the city to accomplish more of its goals for the library remodel in the first phase of the project.

"We've been working with the project architect to look at what sort of items specifically we'd be able to do with this funding," Estes said.

At the top of the priority list is renovating the reading room to comply with Americans with Disabilities Act access guidelines. The proposed library project also includes updating the children's area, redesigning the circulation desk and putting in new windows on the north wall.

Weber said resilience after earthquakes and tsunamis will be especially important because many North Coast communities are right by the ocean.

"Communities up and down the coast have taken the initiative to build that resiliency into their plans, but they need to have funds to finance that to make it a reality," she said.

Cannon Beach has proposed multiple small projects that fit into the earthquake and tsunami

resilience category. One is providing reliable power to survival cache sites — places to keep emergency stockpiles of supplies.

"We have made significant upgrades to our cache sites but will require maintenance," Cannon Beach City Manager Bruce St. Dennis said. "This will be much easier to accomplish with electric power to the sites."

Other projects in Cannon Beach include replacing the main pump station generator, as the existing one is an old military surplus model that has become unreliable; replacing the Haystack pump station main line and mechanical systems to upgrade the control panel that triggers tsunami warnings; and replacing the generator at the Ecola pump station.

"The money I hope is allocated to that area is going to be divided into those smaller projects so they can be accomplished," Weber said.

The allocated funds may or may not cover all the project costs.

Weber said she is still waiting to hear the federal guidelines for what can be funded through the American Rescue Plan, and she cannot guarantee that her requests will be granted by the Legislature.



Emily Lindblom/The Astorian

State Rep. Suzanne Weber asked for \$420,000 from the American Rescue Plan to be used to renovate the Astoria Library.

Review: 'We hope our efforts will be successful in restoring academic rigor to our schools'

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The parents' request for a review of the use of the state curriculum in Knappa is the only such request in recent memory, according to Superintendent Bill Fritz.

A curriculum committee assembled to hear the request opted Tuesday to suspend six of the 10 lessons included in the curriculum, pending a final decision. The committee plans to meet again next week to discuss the matter further in a closed session.

Fritz emphasized that the curriculum was created by the state. Teachers have professional discretion to supplement any curriculum the school district uses in order to enhance students' understanding of a subject or to make it more relevant to the particulars of their students' own lives, he said.

But with the health curriculum, he said at the Tuesday meeting, "the district recognizes that with this type of content, parents expect us to implement the curriculum they have actually viewed so that there are no surprises."

He has since directed teaching staff to implement the health curriculum as designed, without supplementing, in the future.

The school district has also made changes to how parents will be notified about the health course. Eight students in sixth and seventh grade had parents opt them out of the course this school year.

Representatives of the Knappa Parents Organization attended the Tuesday meeting and presented

their concerns, as well as an alternative curriculum, to the school district's committee. They had encouraged community attendance at the meeting, billing it on a Facebook event page as a "Transgender Curriculum Hearing."

They said they felt certain subjects were outside the bounds of a public school curriculum.

"Issues relating to gender identity, sexual preference and sexual orientation that are better left to families to handle," Christopher Morey, the organization's president, told The Astorian.

Knappa Parents Organization is a new group. Its Facebook page was created in May. The founding members include a mix of longtime, multigenerational and newer Knappa residents, according to Morey.

"The common cause was the overwhelming feedback from our fellow community members who felt they had no voice at our school," Morey told The Astorian.

Concerns about the health curriculum united the group initially, but there are other issues they hope to bring to school leadership.

"As we move forward, our group will take up the issues most relevant to our membership," Morey said. "We hope our efforts will be successful in restoring academic rigor to our schools."

The organization's website states, "Our mission is to ensure that all children in the district are treated as individuals, not by a group identity, and receive an equal, fair, traditional education."

Magic shop: Supplies for all ages and skill levels

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So, he opened The Magic Shop & More to offer magic supplies for all ages and skill levels, from beginners to advanced illusionists. He said he hopes to get a group of people interested in magic to come hang out in the store on a regular basis.

Along with dice, props, stink bombs, disappearing ink and more, Howard also plans to expand the shop to offer party supplies, balloons and helium. Customers can also hire Howard as a magician.

"People will be able to book me for events and parties," Howard said.

A crowd of neighboring business owners and others from the community gathered for the ribbon-cutting ceremony outside of the shop on May 28.

"I'm a friend of the magician and he's a big supporter of the local community," said Taz Davis, the owner of Table 360 Bakery & Bistro.



Seth Howard performs a card trick in his shop.

Emily Lindblom/The Astorian

"It's always exciting to have another business open on Commercial Street and the more downtown thrives the more successful we all are."

Katrina Millange said she's seen Howard perform

magic tricks in the past and was impressed.

"I'm very pleased to see him open his own shop, he's pretty amazing," Millange said.

David Reid, the exec-

utive director of the Astoria-Warrenton Area Chamber of Commerce, became the new shop's first customer. He bought a trick golf ball and received a free magic wand.