

IN BRIEF

Downtown association hires interim director

The Astoria Downtown Historic District Association has hired former Astoria City Councilor Jessamyn West as interim executive director.

The association opted to hire West as an interim director following a failed search for a permanent executive director. West will start on July 1.

"I am incredibly honored to be stepping into the interim position but also nervous," West said in a statement. "I really look up to (former director) Sarah Lu (Heath) and remember saying how her shoes were going to be challenging to fill when congratulating her on her new position."

Heath took a job with the Columbia-Pacific Economic Development District this spring after 4 1/2 years with the downtown association.

West, who is part owner of the Oddfellows Building in Astoria and director of the Astoria Arts and Movement Center, had been appointed to the City Council to fill a vacancy in 2019. She opted not to run for election in November when her term was set to end.

"As many other businesses know, this is a challenging time to secure employees, and we are fortunate to have found such a solid leader in the community who could step in and continue the work of the (downtown association)," said Julie Kovatch, the board president.

Surfer dies after being found in the water near Short Sand Beach

A surfer died Saturday after being found in the water unconscious at Short Sand Beach.

Emergency crews were called at about 1:20 p.m. after someone walking along the beach saw a man floating in the water unconscious and not breathing.

When crews arrived, bystanders were performing CPR. The man was taken to the parking lot by a utility task vehicle. From there, the man was taken to Providence Seaside Hospital by ambulance, where officials say he was pronounced dead.

Two people injured in crash on Highway 101

Two people were taken to a hospital Sunday afternoon following a crash on U.S. Highway 101 near Cannon Beach.

Police say a vehicle was heading southbound when the driver crashed into a vehicle that was stopped and waiting to turn left.

The driver and passenger of the vehicle that was rear-ended were taken to the hospital by ambulance.

Warrenton approves budget

WARRENTON — The City Commission on Tuesday approved the budget for the fiscal year that starts in July.

The budget is \$49.5 million, up from \$42.2 million this fiscal year.

The city said the increase is due to a conservative budget approach taken last year during the coronavirus pandemic.

Most of the impact from the pandemic came from a loss in lodging tax revenue.

Warrenton had planned to increase water rates by 5% and sewer by 4% in 2020 to help pay for the increased cost of services, but canceled the increases because of the virus impacts.

The city decided to delay increases again.

— The Astorian

DEATHS

June 22, 2021

HILL, Sanford, 84, of Astoria, died in Astoria. Hughes-Ransom Mortuary is in charge of the arrangements.

RICHMAN, Gene Neal, 73, of Warrenton, died in Warrenton. Caldwell's Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

June 21, 2021

GOULART, Tami, 51, of Hammond, died in Hammond. Hughes-Ransom Mortuary is in charge of the arrangements.

of the arrangements.

SMITH, Douglas, 57, of Astoria, died in Astoria. Hughes-Ransom Mortuary is in charge of the arrangements.

SMITH, Martha, 89, of Astoria, died in Astoria. Hughes-Ransom Mortuary is in charge of the arrangements.

June 19, 2021

GARCIA, Javier, 34, of Portland, died in Seaside. Hughes-Ransom Mortuary is in charge of the arrangements.

ON THE RECORD

Unauthorized use of a vehicle

• Matthew D. Coman, 36, was arrested Saturday on U.S. Highway 30 in Astoria for unauthorized use of a vehicle.

DUI

• Alex J. Heckes, 23, of Chinook, Washington, was arrested Sunday on U.S. Highway 101 for driving under the influence of intoxicants and reckless driving.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

THURSDAY

Sunset Empire Transportation District Board, 9 a.m., budget hearing and board meeting, (electronic meeting).

Clatsop County Recreational Lands Planning Advisory Committee, 1 p.m., (electronic meeting).

Cannon Beach Planning Commission, 6 p.m., (electronic meeting).

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Astoria resumes water shut-offs

Practice suspended during pandemic

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Astorian

People with past due water and sewer bills in Astoria are going to have to pay as city leaders end certain emergency measures tied to the coronavirus pandemic.

The City Council voted Monday to end the city's suspension of late fees and service disconnection as the economy reopens and more people return to jobs and normal life.

Approximately 40 accounts in the city have past-due balances that exceed 30 days and have yet to arrange a formal payment plan with the city. Letters to these accounts will go out by the end of June informing them of their options to pay the outstanding balance.

Any accounts that haven't paid in full or established payment plans with the city by late August will have their water turned off



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Astoria draws drinking water from the Bear Creek watershed.

at the end of that month and face the city's usual collections process, City Manager Brett Estes said.

Other cities have resumed normal water billing, Estes noted.

Warrenton resumed water shut-offs on overdue accounts in March. The city had implemented a similar

suspension of late fees, penalties and service disconnections to assist people during the pandemic.

But there is a point where the city has to return to normal procedures, Astoria City Councilor Roger Rocka said.

He said he was confident about returning to normal operations because of how

the city's finance department works with people on payment options.

The other councilors agreed.

"I think that our staff works well with people, so we'll give them the opportunity to catch up and move forward," City Councilor Tom Hilton said.

Warrenton city manager to retire

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

WARRENTON — City Manager Linda Engbretson announced her retirement Tuesday night after more than 25 years with the city.

Engbretson, the former city recorder, was hired as the interim city manager in 2016 following the resignation of former City Manager Kurt Fritsch.

Fritsch left amid a con-

trovery over the Eighth Street Dam, and Engbretson was offered the position permanently later that year.

Her retirement is effective Sept. 30.

Engbretson said her retirement was planned. She said she is willing to continue on an interim basis until a new city manager is hired to ensure a

smooth transition.

"I have spent the last 26 years as an employee of the city of Warrenton, the last five as the city manager," Engbretson said during a City Commission meeting. "It has been one of the greatest honors of my life to serve the public in this community. I was born in Asto-

ria, but Warrenton has been my community. I am truly grateful to the citizens, the commission and the incredible staff for their support over the years."

Mayor Henry Balensifer recognized Engbretson for taking the helm during a hectic and transitional time for the city.

"It's a sad day for Warrenton," Balensifer said. "And we thank you for what you've done."



Linda Engbretson

Sex ed: Curriculum never reviewed

Continued from Page A1

mittee's decision does not have an immediate impact on the teaching of the "My Future-My Choice" program.

The curriculum, used in Knappa for the past decade, is taught in the spring and will not be taught again until next spring. Fritz is planning a formal review of the curriculum in the fall. Under the school district's policies, the sex education curriculum is supposed to be reviewed every two years. This has never happened, Fritz told the school board.

Parents can choose to opt their children out of the program.

Craig Weaver, the school board chairman, and board members Michelle Finn and Cullen Bangs voted in favor of overturning the committee's decision. Board members Will Isom and Ed Johnson said that while they did not fully agree with aspects of the state curriculum, they were opposed to suspending the program in part because of the upcoming review.

Oregon schools are required to teach a health and sex education program that meets certain state standards or risk losing critical funding. There are no substitute curriculums available that meet state standards, the Knappa curriculum committee noted in its decision last week. An alternative would be to create something in Knappa from the ground up, but there are concerns about the small school district's capacity to take on that kind of a project, Fritz told the school board.

'No place in a classroom'

People who spoke against the curriculum Monday said that what was being taught was inappropriate and out of line with their values.

Christopher Morey, the

president of the Knappa Parents Organization, called for the suspension of the entire curriculum, pending the review in the fall. He wants members of the Knappa Parents Organization to be included on the review board and said the school district should create a new curriculum that is "in line with the community and its standards."

On their Facebook page, the Knappa Parents Organization described the original discussion by the curriculum committee as a "Transgender Curriculum Hearing."

'IT'S HARD TO RESPECT YOUR PURPOSE IF IT'S CLOUDED WITH THE DISRESPECT OF OTHERS.'

Courtney Bangs | Clatsop County commissioner

Morey said sex education is rarely a popular topic.

"What is being included in modern sex ed, however, would have been considered indecent, even borderline criminal, only a generation ago," he said.

Sex education is just one topic the organization plans to tackle including accountability among school district administrators and pandemic-related masking and social distancing, Morey told The Astorian later.

Casey Wray, a Knappa resident and member of the Knappa's Parents Organization, was more specific about her concerns with the state curriculum. She referenced issues she had with two chapters where basic sex acts are defined.

"These subjects have no place in a classroom," she told the school board. "This is a very uncomfortable experience for these kids."

Barbara Oien, a former

nurse with Columbia Memorial Hospital and a longtime resident of Knappa, pushed back against the group's claims to represent a majority of Knappa parents.

She also spoke about her own experience treating students who came from the Knappa community to the hospital's emergency department. Some were pregnant or in abusive situations.

"And they were afraid to tell their parents and in talking to these young people what we found out is they really lacked education," Oien said.

'Not a road we want to go down'

Isom, who, along with serving on the school board is the executive director of the Port of Astoria, expressed his concerns about the Knappa Parents Organization. In a statement he read Monday, he noted that he is a very conservative person with his own opinions and concerns about the state sex education curriculum.

However, he said, there are many ways for people to bring issues to the school district's attention: calling administrators, attending school board meetings or even contacting board members directly.

With the exception of one person who spoke to the school board more than a month ago, Isom said he had not previously heard from anyone in the group about issues with curriculum. The meeting Monday was his first time seeing many of the people at a school board meeting.

He also referred to threatening comments made at the curriculum committee's first meeting and in comments online. Isom recalled one person had said, "This is just the tail of the snake, we can go all the way up to the head of the snake and cut that off."

Online, another person warned that "you're not going to like the outcome if this actually continues."

The Knappa Parents Organization did not publicly denounce, condemn or otherwise separate themselves from these comments, Isom said, adding, "This is scary stuff and not a road we want to go down."

Still, he acknowledged that he agreed with many of the statements made by the organization, particularly that it is possible to teach children to be tolerant of ideas without teaching them those ideas, and that everyone is deserving of respect.

But, he concluded, parents in Knappa do not need the Knappa Parents Organization in order for their voices to be heard.

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