

## IN BRIEF

## High temperatures increase fire risks

An excessive heat warning is in effect for the North Coast on Sunday.

People should expect temperatures in the upper 90s inland from the beaches and temperatures in the mid-80s at the beaches.

Officials warn people to use extreme caution to avoid heat exhaustion and heat stroke. The heat will also increase the risk of wildfires.

People are advised to drink plenty of fluids, stay out of the heat and sun and check up on relatives and neighbors.

A countywide burn ban is in effect and industrial forests on the North Coast will be in the moderate fire danger level.

Recreational fires are only allowed at designated sites. Burn barrels require a burn permit, which can be obtained through the Oregon Department of Forestry or local fire departments.

## County unemployment rate declines

Clatsop County's unemployment rate declined to 6.6% in May.

The seasonally adjusted rate was down from 6.9% in April and from 19.6% in May 2020, when many businesses laid off workers because of government restrictions tied to the coronavirus pandemic.

The statewide rate was 5.9% in May, according to the Oregon Employment Department, compared to 5.8% nationwide.

## County commissioners support tribal recognition for Chinook

Clatsop County commissioners on Wednesday approved a proclamation supporting tribal recognition for the Chinook Indian Nation.

The Chinook Indian Nation represents the Clatsop, Cathlamet, Lower Chinook, Wahkiakum and Willapa tribes.

The proclamation supports the Chinook's efforts to solidify their federal status.

## Dolphin Road to close at bridge

WARRENTON — Dolphin Road will close beginning July 12 at the Dolphin Road Bridge for a repair project.

The project is expected to take about four weeks.

— *The Astorian*

## Ballots postmarked on Election Day will count in Oregon

SALEM — Oregon, the first state to conduct all elections by mail, would join the ranks of states accepting ballots postmarked by Election Day under a bill that is headed to Gov. Kate Brown.

House Bill 3291 was approved by the state Senate on a 16-13 vote Thursday. The key vote was cast by state Sen. Lee Beyer, D-Springfield, who hung back until it was clear his would be the deciding vote.

Beyer said afterward his concern was that in close elections, voters might question the validity of mail ballots counted days after the election date itself. The bill requires ballots to be received by county elections officials no later than seven days after an election.

Brown, in her State of the State remarks earlier this year, endorsed Election Day postmarks. She is a former secretary of state.

Seventeen other states — including California, Washington and Nevada — allow ballots to count if postmarked by Election Day. Four others count ballots if postmarked no later than the day before an election. States that allow Election Day postmarks vary widely, from three to 20 days after an election.

The bill would take effect starting with the 2022 elections.

— *Oregon Capital Bureau*

## CDC extends eviction moratorium

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration on Thursday extended the nationwide ban on evictions for a month to help millions of tenants unable to make rent payments during the coronavirus pandemic, but said this is the last time it plans to do so.

Dr. Rochelle Walensky, director of the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, extended the evictions moratorium from June 30 until July 31. The CDC said "this is intended to be the final extension of the moratorium."

— *Associated Press*

## DEATHS

June 22, 2021

MILLER, Richard, 77, of Astoria, died in Astoria. Hughes-Ransom Mortuary is in charge of the arrangements.

## PUBLIC MEETINGS

MONDAY

Seaside City Council, 7 p.m., 989 Broadway.

TUESDAY

Gearhart City Council, 6:30 p.m., work session, (electronic meeting).

## the Astorian

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## TRAIN UP

Maj. Gen. Michael E. Stencil, the adjutant general of the Oregon National Guard, talked with soldiers Tuesday at a wildland firefighter training at Camp Rilea in Warrenton.

Aaron Perkins/Oregon Military Department

## Park district authorizes lease at rec center

## Education group will use a portion of the building

By R.J. MARX  
*The Astorian*

SEASIDE — The Northwest Regional Education Service District will lease almost 7,400 square feet in the Sunset Recreation Center.

The Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District Board voted unanimously to give executive director Skyler Archibald authorization to sign the deal. The park district acquired the former

Broadway Middle School in January.

"Things have moved right along with working with Northwest Regional since our last meeting and discussion," Archibald said at Tuesday's park district meeting. "I think we're in a really good place, having negotiated some of the finer details of the agreement, as well as the timing and cost per square foot. From the staff's perspective, we feel very comfortable moving forward and working with this organization. It seems that our common missions and service district status are a good fit."

The service district is in

the process of selling their 29,000-square-foot Clatsop Service Center location in Astoria. The space the service district has requested is not being used by the park district, Archibald said.

The lease begins Aug. 1 and runs until July 31, 2023. The annual rent is \$73,840, payable in quarterly installments. After the first year of the agreement, the annual rental income will increase by 1.5% from the previous year's amount. The lease agreement includes a cost per square foot and a stipulation for the service district to cover their portion of utilities.

The lease agreement

includes exclusive use of the counseling offices, three classrooms and the computer lab as well as a janitor closet nearby. It includes shared space of hallways and a men's and women's restroom.

Prior to occupancy, the park district will lease the service district one of the classrooms for storage.

The service district plans to contract out an environmental study of the space, looking at the possibility of mold or other environmental contaminants as well as asbestos.

"That is the last hurdle to cross," Archibald said.

## Owners mull uses of former Gearhart school

## Housing, art space and health center considered

By R.J. MARX  
*The Astorian*

GEARHART — At the north entrance of the former Gearhart Elementary School, the curious can peer through a fence to see a flowering garden with raised planters filled with perennials, roses and vegetables.

"A primary goal has been to save it so it's a pretty entrance to town," said Robert Morey, who with his wife, Timi, purchased the building from the Seaside School District in November.

The garden includes 96 roses planted in honor of Morey's wife's mother, Nadine Clark, an avid gardener who died at 96.

The Moreys have yet to decide on how to use the main school building, which was originally constructed in 1948 and added on to in 1968.

Morey said he is open to a variety of potential uses, which may include workforce housing, art studios, performing arts space or a community health center.

Because of security and liability issues, the property is closed to the public. A 20-foot gate closes off the access driveway on the far western part of the property.

The manufactured portable trailers once used as classroom space are gone.

"If you left them, what would they look like in 20 years?" Morey asked. "We spent thousands with diagrams to try and save them. It made no sense."

Inside the main building, all unnecessary phone, electrical and cable wires are gone. The steam heat boiler is decommissioned and will be replaced.

People in the community have an attachment to the school and the tradition it represents, Morey said. "We're keeping the feeling of the old school, we're not



Photos by R.J. Marx/The Astorian

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Owners removed the trailers formerly used as classroom space at Gearhart Elementary School. Timi Morey planted 96 roses on the campus garden to honor her mother who died at 96 and was an avid gardener throughout her life. Potential uses of the building include apartments, art lofts or meeting spaces.

buying it trying to make it a 2021 building," he said. "It's a 73-year-old building we want to bring up to date."

Any proposals would be contingent on city review and approvals.

"People want to know what you're going to do," Morey said. "We've always said we have no idea until we get in there. It's too early to know what we can do mechanically."

The covered playground will stay for the time being but is expected to be gone next year, Morey said. Because of labor shortages, exterior painting will also be delayed.

Crews are doing septic analysis to help determine what type of housing can be supported on the remainder of the site. Three septic tanks are being decommissioned and two will remain. New homes will be supported by

bottomless sand filter systems, which while more expensive, use less land and make it easier to fill Gearhart's housing needs.

The Moreys have offered the city use of parking areas during an August concert, and have floated the idea that the site could be used as a temporary facility during potential construction of a new firehouse.

The couple is seeking a conditional use permit from the Planning Commission

for a caretaker unit in the northern part of the main building.

The area will be separated from the rest of the main building and have its own exterior entrance, Morey said. The unit will have two bedrooms separated by a breezeway from a shared kitchen and shower areas.

"The plan is to have two caretaker teams that will make 24/7 coverage," he said.

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