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Lawmakers approve money for local projects

By EMILY LINDBLOM
The Astorian

State lawmakers wrapped up the legislative session in Salem over the weekend, approving money for projects on the North Coast that will help with water upgrades, library renovation, disaster preparedness and more.

Astoria will receive infrastructure grants from federal pandemic relief money to make several water improvements. The city will get \$4.8 million for the wastewater treatment plant headworks, \$2.9 million for Pipeline Road water line resilience and \$2.7 million for the 16th Street distribution water line replacement.

Astoria will receive \$420,000 from another pot of federal virus relief money for the Astoria Library renovation.

City Manager Brett Estes said the projects will improve the city's aging infrastructure and make it more resilient. He said getting the money will help save residents and businesses from rate increases for sewer and water.

"These funds coming from the state are going to allow us to move forward on these projects without having to go and look at securing other funds that would need to be paid back by our water and sewer customers," he said.

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Column reopens from restrictions

Visitors can climb the spiral staircase

By ETHAN MYERS
The Astorian

Visitors can once again climb the narrow, 164-step spiral staircase to see the views atop the Astoria Column.

The Column closed during the coronavirus pandemic due to the difficulty of regulating social distancing and sanitizing surfaces inside the monument.

The Friends of the Astoria Column, a nonprofit that oversees the park on Coxcomb Hill for the city, worked closely with the Clatsop County Public Health Department to determine when it was safe to fully open, according to Willis Van Dusen, a former Astoria mayor and treasurer for the Friends group.

The Column reopened on Saturday. "We were excessively careful," Van Dusen said. "It just made sense (to open up)."

Fred Pynes, the park host, said they were ready to reopen for some time and spent much of the closure cleaning the stairs and railings inside the Column in anticipation for the return of visitors.

"People can regulate themselves and wear a mask if they'd like," he said.

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Photos by Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

County commissioners have limited the Planning Commission and advisory committees.

Tension emerges over county land use planning

Commissioners assert greater control

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

Clatsop County commissioners have taken steps over the past several months to tighten the reins over the Planning Commission and advisory committees, creating tension over the direction of land use planning.

In April, commissioners unanimously agreed to pause community involvement in the comprehensive plan update. The update for the

document, which sets planning policies that guide land use, recreation, transportation, natural resources and housing, started in June 2019 with a countywide advisory committee and six citizen advisory committees representing land use planning areas.

When commissioners issued the pause, eight of 18 goals were covered. Commissioners said they wanted to simplify and expedite the process. Concerns were also raised about some of the policy ideas coming out of the committee meetings.

During a Planning Commission meeting in April, Robert Stricklin, a planning commissioner, was critical of the county commission. He said the

Planning Commission, which makes recommendations to commissioners and some land use decisions, had become irrelevant since the county began hiring consultants to do more of the work. Following the meeting, county Commissioner John Toyooka said the mission of the Planning Commission needed to be restated, saying there had been a "drift."

During work sessions in June, the county presented a draft of revised bylaws for the Planning Commission and commissioners supported a new plan for proceeding with the comprehensive plan update.

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Mary Armington and her son, Bill, at the grand opening of the Columbia Memorial Hospital-Oregon Health & Science University Knight Cancer Collaborative.

Fund helps cancer patients with costs

Arm-in-Arm Fund was founded by the Armingtons

By EMILY LINDBLOM
The Astorian

For patients and their families dealing with cancer, everyday costs not covered by insurance like utility bills, day care and transportation can add up to become unmanageable.

That's why Mary Armington and her son, Bill Armington, decided to establish the Arm-in-Arm Fund through the Columbia Memorial Hospital-Oregon Health

ARM-IN-ARM FUND

For more information about the Arm-in-Arm Fund, visit cmh-foundation.org/giving-priorities/arm-in-arm-fund

& Science University Knight Cancer Collaborative.

Bill Armington, a radiologist, said his mother had been concerned about cancer patients who might face financial roadblocks that kept them from receiving the care they need.

"So the Arm-in-Arm Fund was started to help meet those needs

and make cancer care available to people who might not be able to receive it," he said.

Though the Armingtons started the fund and are the largest contributors, they want to get the word out and encourage people to donate so there will be enough going into the future.

Mark Kujala, the director of the Columbia Memorial Hospital Foundation, said the fund

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