

the Astorian

149TH YEAR, NO. 5

WEEKEND EDITION // SATURDAY, JULY 10, 2021

\$1.50

Cannon Beach pursues food tax

Money would help fund emergency response

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Astorian

CANNON BEACH — The city is moving forward with a tax on prepared food in an effort to get tourists to help pay for emergency response and infrastructure.

The City Council voted 3-2 this week in favor of proceeding with an ordinance that would levy a 5% tax on prepared food. City Councilor Nancy McCarthy made the motion, supported by Councilor Mike Benefield and Councilor Brandon Ogilvie. Mayor Sam Steidel and Councilor Robin Risley voted in opposition.

McCarthy, acknowledging a concern expressed by restaurant owners, also asked that the ordinance include a promise of financial assistance to businesses to help them cover the cost of implementing the tax.

Steidel believes the question of a local tax should go to voters in November — something some residents have urged

See Food tax, Page A6

Nonprofit plans drop-in center for homeless

Space planned at former downtown pub

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Astorian

A daytime drop-in center to serve the homeless will open in downtown Astoria next month.

Filling Empty Bellies, a nonprofit that provides meals and other services to people in need, has signed a one-year lease on a building on Commercial Street, the former location of Capricorn Pub and Fine Foods. Both Filling Empty Bellies and Beacon Clubhouse — a nonprofit, membership-based center that provides mental health support and other services — will move into the building.

Osarch Orak, the executive director of Filling Empty Bellies, plans to start small.

He hopes to serve lunch from the building maybe six days a week. The nonprofit has served lunch at city parks — at Peoples Park off Marine Drive and now at a small park at the base of Ninth Street. Eventually, he wants to offer shower and laundry

See Nonprofit, Page A6



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

The Hotel Elliott has seen record visitation every month since March.

Pent-up demand for travel helps area hotels rebound

Labor shortage is a challenge

By MALLORY GRUBEN
For The Astorian

Amid widespread staffing shortages and national reports indicating the hotel industry is still struggling through the coronavirus pandemic, several hotel managers in Astoria say the tourism season started early in 2021 and looks to be on track for a record year driven by pent-up demand to travel.

Hotel Elliott is one example. The 32-room historic hotel has seen record visitation every month since March, said John C. Nelson, the general manager. He expects the trend to continue into the summer.

“Demand is very strong right now ... and it’s never been this strong before,”

Nelson said. “I don’t think the hotel is unique with this business. I think everyone who can be open and staff ... I think they’ve been having records, too.”

Like most other sectors of the hospitality industry, hotels and motels suffered a major economic hit due to the pandemic. A report released by the American Hotel and Lodging Association showed that more than 900 hotels in Oregon were forced to foreclose or close in the first six months of the pandemic, while more than 11,500 jobs in the industry were lost in that same time period.

‘WE ARE GOING TO BREAK A RECORD FOR JULY. AND WE’VE BROKEN RECORDS THE LAST FIVE MONTHS.’

John C. Nelson | general manager of Hotel Elliott

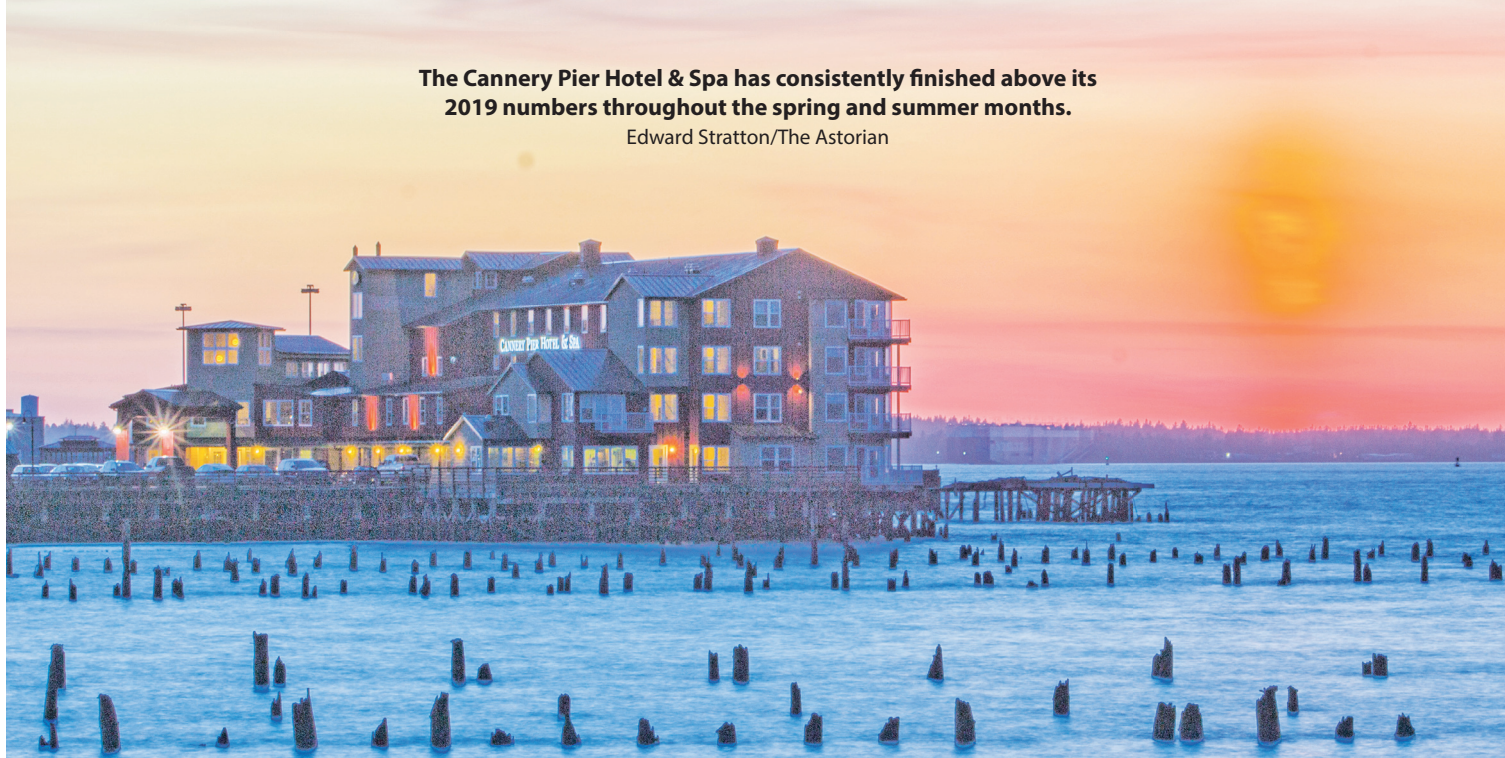
“A lot of people don’t realize, but the hotel industry and the lodging industry was one of the earliest hit by the pandemic because of the shutdown of travel, and the restriction on gathering sizes,” said Greg Astley, director of government affairs for the Oregon Restaurant and Lodging Association. “Although (hotels) weren’t shut down specifically, like the restaurant industry, they still suffered greatly because of those restrictions and limitations.”

Even as COVID-19 restrictions lift, the national hotel industry continues to

See Hotels, Page A6

The Cannery Pier Hotel & Spa has consistently finished above its 2019 numbers throughout the spring and summer months.

Edward Stratton/The Astorian



Astoria Riverfront Trolley to return

Rides to restart on July 23

By GRIFFIN REILLY
The Astorian

Bob Miller laughed as onlookers cheered and captured photos of the Astoria Riverfront Trolley during a training run on Thursday morning.

“It’s clear the public are ready for us, our picture is all over Facebook,” said Miller, a conductor who serves on the trolley’s operations and safety committee.

The committee decided Thursday night that the trolley would reopen

service on July 23 after a 16-month hiatus. The trolley will run from 12 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays until enough new volunteers can be certified for a full seven-day-a-week schedule.

When the pandemic hit and service was suspended in 2020, the trolley lost many of its volunteers. Those who were left continued to do regular maintenance on the track and other tasks, but at a slower pace than they had hoped.

Much of the maintenance includes repairing weary joints in the track and digging portions of the rail out of the mud.

“All of us volunteers are, how you might say, of a certain age where we are more susceptible to conditions than others,” said Frank Kemp, the trolley maintenance coordinator and trainer since 2011. “We replaced ties and did track maintenance for the first year, and then everyone just got burned out, as did a lot of businesses.”

See Trolley, Page A6



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

The Astoria Riverfront Trolley takes riders along the waterfront.

