

County records 10th virus death

The Astorian

The Oregon Health Authority reported a 10th person in Clatsop County has died from the coronavirus. An 86-year-old man died on March 2 at Columbia Memorial Hos-

pital in Astoria after testing positive for the virus on Feb. 19. The man was reported to have had underlying conditions, but no other information was provided.

Since the pandemic began, Clatsop County has recorded 1,098 virus

cases. Twenty-five people have been hospitalized and 10 have died.

Nine new cases were reported in the county on Tuesday.

The health authority reported 211,315 cases and 2,803 deaths from the virus statewide as of Wednesday.

Tourism: Lack of communication was an emphasis during meeting

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David Reid, the executive director of the Astoria-Warrenton Area Chamber of Commerce, made several appeals to the City Commission over the past few months, urging them to not withdraw funds.

City commissioners debated how much to reduce the distribution before settling on 2%. Commissioner Rick Newton, who favored a 3% distribution, voted “no.”

“It’s disappointing,” Reid said of the City Commission’s vote. “We think the committee has made the case that marketing is important for Warrenton and that the committee is an apt tool for doing that marketing and has been for a number of years.”

However, Reid said he is optimistic that the tourism committee can work with the city moving forward.

“We’re pleased that they are still in the committee because it gives us a place to go and try to continue to make that case so that next year we can get them back to full funding,” he said.

WARRENTON WILL GO FROM SENDING THE TOURISM COMMITTEE ABOUT \$52,750 TO ABOUT \$15,500.

The lack of communication between the city and the tourism committee was an emphasis during the meeting on Tuesday, and both parties agreed that more needed to be done. City commissioners acknowledged they had not been regularly attending tourism committee meetings.

“It’s a two-way street,” Reid said. “The committee is a tool and it needs to be wielded. It needs somebody providing the input as to how they want it to be used and being at the table. That’s the big thing we need to work on next year is making sure everybody is talking together and that the opinions and interests of all sides are being addressed.”

Although Reid noted that the decrease from 6.8% to 2% is big, he doesn’t think there will be a significant change in the messaging and marketing that the tourism committee provides.

“The committee is in good shape financially. They will be able to do what they do.

“What may change over time is the emphasis. If Warrenton continues to withdraw, it will be difficult to, sort of, focus on those areas but there will still be some need to do that because the product, when you’re talking about attracting visitors, the product is the entire area, you can’t ignore the Pacific Ocean nor can you ignore Astoria in either of those conversations,” he said.

Mayor Henry Balensifer said that it would be better for the city to negotiate with the tourism committee what it wants rather than to completely cut the cord in regards to funding.

“The mantra here is Warrenton for Warrenton,” the mayor said. “The idea is that for so long we have been just, ‘Develop anything, do anything you want.’ Kind of the Wild West. We are trying to look down ... ‘What does it mean to live in Warrenton and how do we protect the people who do live here?’”

“I think there is more detailed information they want that they aren’t getting right now because we have gotten more out of LCTC in the years prior, but I think the commission is really delving into, ‘What is it doing for residents?’”

Several residents came to the meeting Tuesday to complain to the City Commission about the lack of dredging done at the Hammond Marina. The revenue from lodging taxes that was removed from the tourism committee will be funneled to the marina’s capital reserve fund.

“It’s important to note that it is not just going to the Hammond Marina operations. It’s going to the capital reserve, which is dredging and capital improvements. It’s not getting lost, so to speak,” Balensifer said.

The city will go from sending the tourism committee about \$52,750 to about \$15,500.

College: ‘It’s been challenging and it really is unacceptable’

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At a college board meeting Tuesday, a nursing student described a situation where her personal information was revealed to her entire class after she attempted, unsuccessfully, to use the college’s scholarship application portal. She faced silence or dismissal from college staff when she sought help, she said.

She told the board the college had a serious liability on its hands.

“Just what is it going to take to pull the trigger to get rid of this God-awful computer system?” Tim Lyman, a board member who has been critical of the software system, asked following the student’s comments.

“Do we have to get sued?” he added. “Is that what it’s going to take?”

Lyman had recruited candidates to run against incumbents in the May election based on his concerns that college leadership was not adequately addressing enrollment and software issues or student and staff concerns.

He set up a website to broadcast his claims — actions that then-board chairman Robert Duehmig criticized in a statement at his final college board meeting in June. Duehmig lost his seat to newcomer Trudy Van Dusen Citovic in the May election.

In his statement, Duehmig noted that the college faces a number of challenges going forward.

“We are the entity that is the public face of the college,” he said, “and I have no doubt that Clatsop Community College is going to handle the enrollment issues that have been brought on by the pandemic. We’ve handled other issues.”

But, in light of Lyman’s claims and actions, Duehmig had some concerns about the integrity of this public face. He called Lyman’s actions and statements “appalling.”

“We have to be able to operate as a board, look at facts, have some hard discussions and be able to present ourselves as a voice that the public can trust,” he said.

Lyman’s website included false statements about the college and its leadership, Duehmig said. Lyman also took swings at his fellow board members while promoting candidates he said he’d recruited.

Van Dusen Citovic was included on the site, but told The Astorian after the election that Lyman included her without her consent.

Since the spring, the college has taken several actions to encourage a return to classes with increased marketing and by offering dually-enrolled Clatsop County high school students from the classes of 2021 and 2022 free tuition, fees and books for one class this summer. College staff have been reaching out to existing credential-seeking students who have not graduated or completed their programs to try to retain them for future classes.

On Tuesday, Breitmeyer told the college board he is aware of the issues the nursing student faced with college software. Recent staff turnover and lingering problems with CampusNexus are to blame, he said. The college is taking steps to address the technological problems as well as staff response time to students’ concerns.

“It’s been challenging and it really is unacceptable,” he said.

Jerad Sorber, the college’s vice president for student services, said an update to the software is coming that should lead to a more efficient, user-friendly process. Online enrollment has been smoother than in the past, he noted.

Breitmeyer is also engaged in larger discussions about issues facing Oregon’s community colleges.

On Tuesday, Breitmeyer and student Miranda King participated in a panel of educators who met with U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona and U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici in Beaverton.

The goal of the session was to provide Cardona with information and feedback to use in crafting and promoting President Joe Biden’s American Families Plan. A component of the plan is a proposal for free community college. Breitmeyer said such a move would be a game-changer for the nation. Community college is already free for many recent high school graduates in Oregon under the Oregon Promise Grant.

Clatsop Community College, like many schools in Oregon, received some federal dollars to help weather shortfalls due to the pandemic.

Community college leaders said continued support and funding for existing programs — as well as for programs promised under the Biden administration — equitable access to education and increased partnerships with high schools and employers are all important as institutions move forward.

Treatment: ‘We literally have nothing except for to go out and be with them every day’

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Boudon said when someone is ready to accept treatment there is a small window to act before momentum is lost. People need to be consistent, motivated and have tools, like constant access to a phone, she said, and the process can be cumbersome.

The goal, she said, becomes keeping people alive day to day.

She said that because the only shelters in the county require people to be sober, people who are homeless and struggling with drug or alcohol abuse have an additional barrier that keeps them trapped in addiction.

“So not only are they houseless with a substance use disorder, there’s no ability to get them housing, there’s no ability to get them

into residential and that’s how we’re losing them,” Boudon said. “It’s a loss-loss situation because we literally have nothing except for to go out and be with them every day, let them know that they’re seen, bring them water, take them to coffee, let them know that they’re valued and they’re worthy of trying to continue to meet their goals or improve their quality of life somehow.

“And just instill that hope in them that they should not stop trying. Because, who knows, one day it might get better.”

But she said most people in that situation become discouraged.

“And that’s heartbreaking,” Boudon said. “I’m tired of seeing people die because we don’t have enough resources to keep them alive.”

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A: Imagine one of your teeth — it has two main sections: the crown above the gum line and the root below.

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The layer of enamel may be thinner and the gum line may have receded, exposing more dentin. Therefore, the recession makes teeth more sensitive.

Sensitive toothpaste works by blocking the tubules in the dentine with a chemical called strontium chloride. Repeated use builds up a strong barrier by plugging the tubules more and more, leading to less-sensitive teeth.

Gearhart: Project was sent to each city department

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work,” Speakman wrote. “It requires heavy equipment and a reasonable amount of space. As any artist does, she also needs a place to display her work.”

Speakman’s wife is also a painter and would display her work at the space, he said. “We would be able to use this showroom as a gallery for all of us, really,” Speakman said at last week’s meeting.

The Gearhart Ironwerks represented “the obvious solution,” he said.

“I know the building and its history well,” he said. “All the infrastructure is in place to support any artis-

tic endeavor. It features a spacious showroom, ideally suited for displaying art and meeting clients. It also features a large workroom with concrete floor.”

The Speakmans anticipate the business will be open to the public, three to five days a week, including weekends.

Plans submitted to the Planning Commission show a 700-square-foot gallery, workroom and living space. The site is designated commercial by the city’s comprehensive plan and designated general commercial by the city’s zoning ordinance. The Speakmans’ request is for approval of a conditional use permit to

modify the existing interior space to accommodate an artist’s residence, within about a quarter of the existing building footprint.

Code requires a conditional use permit for the gallery and use of the home as a residence.

The project was sent to each city department and there were no objections, City Planner Carole Connell said.

Commissioners unanimously approved the application with conditions, including a 5-foot-wide walkway constructed in the Pacific Way frontage.

Owners must file a sign permit request with the city prior to installation of any

signs. They are encouraged to provide a bicycle rack in the entrance area.

Prior to issuance of a building or occupancy permit, the Speakmans must provide the city with a copy of the septic system approval from the state Department of Environmental Quality and Clatsop County Public Health Department.

“This is one of the most positive land use applications I’ve ever had the privilege of working on, in so many ways,” Connell said. “It’s a perfectly suited use to put the residents and gallery together in a very attractive space. It’s really a win-win for everybody.”



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