



INSIDE

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## A vacation rental turns into a burr for Warrenton



### City Commission had made an exception for homeowner

By **ETHAN MYERS**  
*The Astorian*

**WARRENTON** — In January, the City Commission granted an exception for a vacation rental in a residential neighborhood on Honeysuckle Loop.

That decision would come back to bite the city as neighbors have complained of noise and overcrowding.

“The thing that really bothers me Henry, is, once again, we help somebody and it bites us in the butt. Every time,” City Commissioner Rick Newton told Mayor Henry Balensifer during a City Commission meeting last week. “I don’t have a problem revoking it because we did her a favor letting her do that and we didn’t get what we should’ve.”

“It’s time for us to pull the cord and say, ‘Nope.’”

The city is moving forward with a stop-work order on the vacation rental. Marissa Lauren, the homeowner, did not participate in the commission meeting last week and could not be reached for comment.

Tensions over vacation rentals in residential neighborhoods on the North Coast have led to calls for tighter government restrictions. Short-term rentals have become increasingly popular as the region evolves into a tourist destination, but rentals help drive up housing prices and contribute to Clatsop County’s housing crunch.

The vacation rental on Honeysuckle Loop, a duplex that sits in a neighborhood that also includes apartments and other multiunit housing, is one small example of the challenge.

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Rick Newton | city commissioner

Despite vacation rentals not being allowed in residential high density zones, the City Commission made an exception. Another vacation rental the homeowner operates in Hammond, which is also in a residential high density zone, was granted an exception, too.

At the January meeting, Commissioner Mark Baldwin noted that the city reserved the right to rescind the exceptions if there were problems at either location.

In a matter of time, problems began to pile up when neighbors reported excessive noise, an overflow of parked cars and up to 12 people renting out both sides of the duplex, when only one side was supposed to be used as a vacation rental.

“Sometimes, there are a lot of people that go in and out of there,” said Andrew Dylan, who lives in an apartment across the street. “It’s pretty ridiculous.”

“I try to not get too bothered by it, but it can be (a nuisance),” he said.

Other neighbors said they had not noticed anything unusual at the duplex. Some were unaware it was used as a

vacation rental. One neighbor said the only noticeable noise came during the Fourth of July, but it was expected for such a holiday.

During the City Commission meeting last week, commissioners deliberated what to do.

“It’s ridiculous people come from out of town and do this in our neighborhoods,” Baldwin said.

Newton pointed to the potential safety hazard if the reports from neighbors were accurate. “Having 12 people in that house at one time is no different than not having smoke detectors,” he said.

Balensifer said “there is anguish, angst, damages being incurred by that neighborhood by the use of this facility that had specific requirements upon it that we agreed to and not being followed.”

If the homeowner does not comply with the stop-work order, the city could seek to revoke the other vacation rental in Hammond.

“This is a clear violation and we have to take care of the residents first,” the mayor said.

Griffin Reilly/The Astorian  
**A vacation rental on Honeysuckle Loop has been a challenge for the city.**

## County weighs term limits for planning commissioners

One of several potential revisions to bylaws

By **ERICK BENGEL**  
*The Astorian*

At a joint work session Tuesday, the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners and the Planning Commission debated the merits of term limits for planning commissioners.

The meeting came at a moment of political friction.

Commissioners have floated the possibility of tightening the rules within which the Planning Commission operates, initiating a discussion of specific bylaw changes.

The Board of Commissioners has the power to appoint and remove planning commissioners. The new rules would limit planning commissioners to two, four-year terms, or 10 years if a commissioner has been appointed to finish out an unexpired term unless the board extends it.

Other possible bylaw revisions include allowing the Planning Commission chair to impose time limits for public hearings, and removing planning commissioners for failing to attend at least two meetings without good explanation.

Robert Stricklin, a longtime planning commissioner, said he opposes term limits, in part because there has long been a shortage of applicants with a background in land use or other relevant disciplines.

See Term limits, Page A6

## City repeals old ‘no swimming’ rule near parks

One swimmer routinely braves the river

By **KATIE FRANKOWICZ**  
*The Astorian*

Tim Kennedy is about to break the law. On a sloping, debris-strewn beach just east of the Astoria Bridge, he steps past a dead cormorant, a waterlogged bicycle seat cover and two discarded oranges.

He slides ear plugs into his ears and wades out under a trestle. He pauses to stash his sandals up among the beams and fix goggles over his eyes. A commercial fishing boat motors by, trailed by gulls.

Kennedy takes a breath and dives into the Columbia River.

City leaders don’t know how the rule came to exist, or why, but until Monday night, it was illegal for anyone to wade or swim in waters adjacent to a city park.

See Repeal, Page A6

## Nonprofit finds a buyer for Hawaiian Chieftain

Ship sold for \$150,000

By **GRIFFIN REILLY**  
*The Astorian*

The Hawaiian Chieftain, a replica of the tall trading ships from the 19th century, has been sold.

The vessel had fallen into disrepair and was docked at Pier 39 in Astoria while the Aberdeen, Washington, based Grays Harbor Historical Seaport searched for a buyer.

Aubrey and Matt Wilson bought the Chieftain for \$150,000 and hope to return the vessel to Hawaii after a monthslong repair project in Port Townsend, Washington.

“Really, it came down to money,” said Brandi Bednarik, the business operations manager at Grays Harbor Historical Seaport. They had already spent around \$300,000 on repairs for the Chieftain, she said.

“Lady Washington, our other ship, is going to need restoration over the next couple of years. We also had taken over a 34-acre abandoned mill site in Washington in 2013 that we’re redeveloping,” she said. “All three together was just too much.”

Aubrey Wilson has experience working as a deckhand on similar traditionally-rigged tall ships, and was particularly interested in the Chieftain because of its Hawaii heritage.

“It was just like fate,” she said. “We were like, ‘This is the one. Let’s buy her and bring her home.’”

Once the repairs are complete, they’ll sail the ship back to Hawaii.

There, they plan to take passengers on sailing tours and provide training opportunities.

Built in 1988, the Chieftain is not unlike similar steel-hull boats at the time. One of its biggest issues, according to Bednarik, is that its hull wasn’t prepared for the amount of electrical current in the waters today. The Lady Washington was built just one year later.

“I have learned from that,” Bednarik said. “I would not have two boats the same age. Once they get over 30, they really start to need more work. It’s a typical age for a boat to really start needing that serious restoration.”

The nonprofit has owned the Chieftain since 2005. The vessel was a familiar sight in Astoria, where it was featured for tours and sailing excursions.

Repairs to the Chieftain could cost as much as \$800,000 over six months to a year to replace



The Hawaiian Chieftain had fallen into disrepair.

engines, treat the hull’s electrolysis issue and address any other concerns.

“We understand many people are emotionally invested in the

Chieftain’s future, and a change like this can be hard, but we hope everyone will be as excited as we are about our plans,” said Aubrey Wilson. “We’re super excited.”



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