

IN BRIEF

Lil' Sprouts Academy staffer tests positive for virus

A staffer at Lil' Sprouts Academy, Astoria's child care program, has tested positive for the coronavirus.

City Manager Brett Estes said the city is working with the Clatsop County Public Health Department to ensure all appropriate protocols are being taken.

"Nothing more is known at this point in time," Estes said.

City Councilor Brownson to hold meet-and-greet event

Astoria City Councilor Tom Brownson is holding a "Meet Your Councilor, Ward 2" event at 9 a.m. Saturday at Peter Pan Market, 712 Niagara Ave.

City Councilor Herman to host meeting

Astoria City Councilor Joan Herman will host her first in-person "Meet the Councilor" event in more than a year.

The event will be held from 4 to 5 p.m. on Aug. 4 in the Flag Room at the Astoria Library. The event is a chance for Herman to hear from residents about their concerns.

Herman can also be reached at jherman@astoria.or.us or by voicemail at 503-298-2408.

— *The Astorian*

Washington state urges masks indoors

Washington state's top epidemiologist is recommending that everyone wear a mask or face covering in crowded indoor places because of the rise of the COVID-19 Delta variant — even if they have been vaccinated.

Dr. Scott Lindquist said Friday the state is seeing a "fifth wave" of the coronavirus that is sending more people to the hospital.

"The majority of these hospitalizations can be prevented by people getting vaccinated," Linquist said.

The Department of Health and Gov. Jay Inslee aren't formally reinstating mask mandates or other measures yet, Lindquist said.

Warming rivers in the West killing fish

SAN FRANCISCO — Baby salmon are dying by the thousands in one California river, and an entire run of endangered salmon could be wiped out in another. Fishermen who make their living off adult salmon, once they enter the Pacific Ocean, are sounding the alarm as blistering heat waves and extended drought in the West raise water temperatures and imperil fish from Idaho to California.

Hundreds of thousands of young salmon are dying in Northern California's Klamath River as low water levels brought about by drought allow a parasite to thrive, devastating a Native American tribe whose diet and traditions are tied to the fish. And wildlife officials said the Sacramento River is facing a "near-complete loss" of young Chinook salmon due to abnormally warm water.

A crash in one year's class of young salmon can have lasting effects on the total population and shorten or stop the fishing season, a growing concern as climate change continues to make the West hotter and drier. That could be devastating to the commercial salmon fishing industry, which in California alone is worth \$1.4 billion.

The plummeting catch already has led to skyrocketing retail prices for salmon, hurting customers who say they can no longer afford the \$35 per pound of fish, said Mike Hudson, who has spent the last 25 years catching and selling salmon at farmers markets in Berkeley.

Hudson said he has considered retiring and selling his 40-foot boat because "it's going to get worse from here."

— *Associated Press*

DEATHS

July 24, 2021

DUMOND, Nancy Lynn, 67, of Seaside, died in Seaside. Ocean View Funeral & Cremation Service of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

July 21, 2021

CROTHERS, Cynthia B., 68, of Astoria, died in Portland. Caldwell's Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

ON THE RECORD

Theft

• Ciara Roundtree, 20, of Seaside, was arrested Sunday afternoon at Walmart in Warrenton for theft in the second degree.

• Jacob Terrill, 34, of Gearhart, was arrested Saturday afternoon at Fred Meyer in Warrenton for theft in the second degree.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

TUESDAY

Astoria Planning Commission, 5:30 p.m., City Hall, 1095 Duane St.

Seaside Airport Advisory Committee, 6 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Warrenton City Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 225 S. Main Ave.

WEDNESDAY

Astoria Parks Board, 6:45 a.m., City Hall, 1095 Duane St.

Clatsop County Board of Commissioners, 6 p.m., (electronic meeting).

the Astorian

Established July 1, 1873
(USPS 035-000)

Published Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday by EO Media Group, 949 Exchange St., PO Box 210, Astoria, OR 97103 Telephone 503-325-3211, 800-781-3211 or Fax 503-325-6573. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Astorian, PO Box 210, Astoria, OR 97103-0210

DailyAstorian.com

MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MEMBER CERTIFIED AUDIT OF CIRCULATIONS, INC.

Circulation phone number:
800-781-3214

Periodicals postage paid at Astoria, OR

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Printed on recycled paper

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Effective January 12, 2021

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FLIPPING OUT

Luke Whittaker/Chinook Observer

Ty Sarkkinen, 16, of Battle Ground, did a backflip as fireworks exploded behind him on the Fourth of July in Long Beach.

Planned proposal to lay cables under Columbia River met with skepticism

By PETER FAIRLEY
InvestigateWest

Can slicing a 100-mile trench into the bed of the Columbia River be good for the environment? The answer is a big "yes," says a team of energy developers that proposes submerging power cables in the riverbed.

The developers say the cables could deliver clean energy that will be crucial for getting the most densely developed areas of Cascadia off fossil fuels.

A proposal by energy developer Sun2o Partners and transmission developer PowerBridge would insert the cables into the Columbia at the Dalles in Oregon. This electrical on-ramp is near the wind farms and solar farms installed along the Columbia Gorge in Eastern Oregon and Washington state.

The cables also would intersect the monster transmission lines at the Bonneville Power Administration's Big Eddy substation, drawing cheaper solar power from the Southwest, steadier wind

'WHETHER IT'S RENEWABLE ENERGY OR FOSSIL ENERGY, WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND HOW A PROJECT IS GOING TO IMPACT PEOPLE THAT RELY ON THE COLUMBIA FOR SALMON AND FOR CLEAN WATER.'

Lauren Goldberg | legal and program director for Columbia Riverkeeper

power from Montana and Wyoming and reliable backup power from British Columbia's supersized hydropower reservoirs.

But even climate-conscious developers can't make plans involving a natural resource like the Columbia River without causing uneasiness among those concerned with ecosystems and communities. Along the Columbia, those affected would include tribal nations and unique cultural interests.

Sun2o and PowerBridge propose to bring their cables ashore in Portland, helping to electrify industries, buildings

and vehicles while reducing the use of coal- and gas-fired power plants. Hence the project's name: Cascade Renewable Transmission.

"The only places you can site solar and wind at scale are, for the most part, east of the Cascades. But the demand, the need for the electricity, is in Portland and Seattle, on the west side," said Corey Kuper-Smith, the New York-based renewable energy developer who cofounded Sun2o and dreamed up the cable scheme. And power lines that link east and west are filling up fast, he said.

Anticipating environmen-

tal concerns, the developers assert they will do little harm to the Columbia, employing high-pressure pumps that make underwater cable installation quick and not so dirty. Water jets would shoot down from a hydroplow towed along the riverbed, stirring open an 18-inch-wide trench in the sediment.

Environmental impacts, they argue, would likely be short term and outweighed by environmental gains: reductions in pollution from natural gas, petroleum fuels and coal. That includes emissions of carbon dioxide and methane, two greenhouse gases that are supercharging Cascadia's wildfires and heat waves and disrupting even the Columbia's temperature and timing.

One more industrial enterprise

To Elaine Harvey, however, the Cascade Renewable Transmission pitch sounds like one more industrial enterprise in a stream of projects that have harmed her people.

See Cables, Page A3

New reporter a familiar face

Bengel rejoins The Astorian

By ETHAN MYERS
The Astorian

A familiar face is back with The Astorian.

Erick Bengel, who worked as a reporter and the Coast Weekend editor for the paper from 2015 to 2019, will cover criminal justice, social services and county government this time around.

"I've always envied the person who occupied this beat," he said. "It always seemed like an essential challenge ... I like that it is a serious beat and has very sharp edges to it."

Bengel filled in for reporters over the years and dabbled in the beat during his two years at the Cannon Beach Gazette.

"But this is the first time I've been able to own it," he said.

When Bengel left The Astorian in 2019, he moved to New York to get a master's degree in journalism at Columbia University.

With a bachelor's degree from Portland State University in philosophy and political science, he had never formally studied journalism outside of a few high school classes.

"I wanted to study it in a serious and systematic way," Bengel said.

Journalism first came on Bengel's radar at Portland State, where he was a news writer, the arts and culture editor and eventually the editor-in-chief at the university's student newspaper, The Vanguard.

Bengel first joined The Astorian through the Snowden internship program in 2011, where he first saw the service that local journalism fills.

"We give people the information they need to navigate their day-to-day lives and communities," he said. "It has an immedi-

acy that oftentimes large-scale reporting fails to capture because you are reading about your neighbors, you are reading about locations you know well — an immediacy and an intimacy. Insofar as you think anything local is important — local elections, local services — local journalism is incredibly important."

As for Bengel's long-term goals, he hopes to keep broadening his horizons within journalism.

"At this point, I am trying to get good at different modes and forms of journalism and that is what excited me about this beat," he said.



Erick Bengel



Nikki Davidson

Coast Weekend welcomes new editor

Davidson brings experience in multimedia

By GRIFFIN REILLY
The Astorian

Though Nikki Davidson's career in journalism has taken her all over the country, her landing in Astoria will be her first taste of Oregon.

Davidson is taking over as the new editor of Coast Weekend, a weekly arts and entertainment publication featured in The Astorian and Chinook Observer.

She hopes telling the stories of a region with such rich history will help her get familiar with the area, as well as let her explore one of her biggest interests.

"I'm very interested in history," she said. "I really want to delve into the quirky history stories that people don't hear about as often — the ones that seem like they're lost in time."

Davidson started her time in journalism at the University of Northern Iowa, where she was editor of the school's paper. At the same time, she juggled working for a local public access station and as an associate producer for

Iowa Public Radio.

She has had reporting and anchor roles at television stations in Michigan, South Carolina, Iowa, Minnesota and Louisiana.

While often difficult, Davidson said her time in broadcast journalism exposed her to the value of visual media in storytelling, something she hopes to incorporate into her work with Coast Weekend.

"We can do multimedia, maybe some videos — just to really showcase the area and the people in a way that print alone can't do," she said. "I think it can really complement the work that we're doing here."

In an area as beautiful as the North Coast, she said, creating that type of content shouldn't be a problem.

"It seems like a really awesome place to be," she said.

Davidson said overseeing Coast Weekend is somewhat of a perfect situation for her, since it allows her to stick beside her husband in the U.S. Coast Guard while indulging her passions for storytelling and journalism.

Her husband, Patrick, is stationed at Cape Disappointment in Washington state. Previously, the couple lived in Louisiana.

"You don't always necessarily get to choose where you end up in journalism," Davidson said. "Getting the ability to do what has been my passion in life in the place that we are is really what attracted me to this."

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