

# Field: The school district has several options

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broke down temporary outfield fences for practice and competition — fences which often fell during games. The softball coach and softball athletes reported having to roll temporary, heavy foul poles out, and described the wheels “not working well.”

While the baseball teams practiced during softball games, softball teams were prohibited from practicing during baseball games.

In addition to Broadway Field, the junior varsity softball team used Wahanna Field, but only sparingly because of its poor condition.

“The infield dirt was hard and uneven, with no markings for a pitching mound, foul lines, batter’s box, or other markings of any kind, and the grass outfield was muddy and uneven,” according to a letter from the Office for Civil Rights.

The Office for Civil Rights concluded that the softball field, as compared to the baseball field, “may result in the denial of equal opportunity to female athletes.”



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

The turf in the pitcher's circle is poorly patched and uneven.

During the investigation, the school district expressed interest in resolving the complaint. “OCR agreed that the complaint is appropriate to resolve prior to the conclusion of the investigation,” the letter said.

## Several options

The school district has several options, Anderson said, from tearing down the boys’ field, modifying it with a portable mound or building another softball field. His preference, he said, is “right here, right here on the boys’ baseball field.”

If the school district moves the girls’ field off Broadway Field, then they increase the distance for

girls to the new batting practice facility. “And now the boys would have the advantage, short access, to where the girls would have to travel,” Anderson said.

The park district, which maintains Broadway Field, is aware of the agreement, executive director Skyler Archibald said.

“We have had ongoing and productive conversations with the city and school district regarding this,” he said. “We will continue to work with them to determine the best way to move forward and I am optimistic for a great outcome for our community and athletes that use the Broadway Field.”

# Astoria schools: ‘We’ve done what we can’

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In making their decision, Astoria School District leaders pointed to the fact that vaccines against the virus have been available to adults and older children for months now, and that there are fewer cases and lower instances of spread of the virus among younger children.

Superintendent Craig Hoppes told the school board he preferred an option that recommended masking but did not require it.

“I’ve felt like for the past year and a half we’ve been telling parents what they have to do and not given them any options,” he said.

Jeanette Sampson, a school board member, was firm in her belief that masks needed to be a choice. The pandemic has gone on for more than a year and the district has taken a number of measures to inform parents and make things as safe as possible, she said.

“We’ve done what we can,” she said.

Board member Jenna Rickenbach agreed. She clarified that she is not against vaccination, but every family is different and some people may not be able, medically, to receive a vaccine. In the meantime, she worried about how masks might hamper learning for younger children.

“I feel like parents are being vigilant and we can put mask ownership on parents and not the five of us,” she said, referring to the school board. “We need parents to take ownership.”

Board members Grace Laman and Heidi Wintermute were against the decision, noting that health experts continue to recommend wearing masks. Laman was also concerned about students who might be immunocompromised but who would benefit from a return to in-person school. These students may have to stay home if masking protocols are not in place, she said.

The school district plans to continue offering an online school option.

In a statement, Melissa Grothe, a fourth grade teacher and president of the Astoria Education Association, the teachers union, said in a statement to The Astorian that she hoped as many people as possible received vaccinations.

“And that those that are unable, or choose not to vaccinate, will practice other safety measures in order to protect the health and safety of all our staff and students,” she said.

The Jewell and Knappa school districts are in the process of finalizing their return-to-school protocols. Jewell School will have masks available for students on campus, but masks will not be required except on school buses.

The Warrenton-Hammond



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

A divided Astoria school board voted to give families the choice on masks when school begins in the fall.

School District is waiting on the results of a survey sent out to families that asks for feedback on masking and social distancing options.

Students and staff will likely still need to follow some pandemic protocols. Frequent hand-washing and wellness checks are easy to implement and don’t disrupt the daily schedules at school buildings, Superintendent Tom Rogozinski wrote in a letter to the community. Masks and social distancing

are trickier, he said.

It’s often a political discussion, Rickenbach said Monday.

Implied in all of the different district discussions and usually stated in their preliminary plans is the understanding that everything could change by the time the school year actually begins in September.

As Astoria’s district leaders noted Monday: They have local control over decisions like masking — for now.

# Masks: Hospitalizations spike

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The health authority on Wednesday reported 804 new virus cases in Oregon, including eight in Clatsop County. On Tuesday, the state reported 1,032 new virus cases, including 13 in Clatsop County.

“Today’s reported sharp rise in cases and hospitalizations in Oregon are sobering reminders that the pandemic is not over, especially for Oregonians who remain unvaccinated,” Dr. Dean Sidelinger, the state’s epidemiologist and health officer, said in a statement Tuesday.

Most of the new virus cases in Oregon and across the country involve people who are unvaccinated. But the CDC also cited data that showed the potential for the delta variant to spread among people who have received vaccines.

“We know that the CDC is recommending indoor masking again. We would encourage people to follow that, and then again, vaccinations are your best option for avoiding the virus at all,” Tom Bennett, a spokesman for Clatsop County, said.

Asked about the recent rise of virus cases in the county, Bennett said “the large majority are unvaccinated. We’re seeing more people out without masks, congregated without masks. It’s concerning, but it’s really not all that surprising.”

Oregon lifted most government restrictions to con-

tain the virus at the end of June, as the state, and nation, appeared to have reached a milestone in the pandemic. Public health experts expected a rise of new cases after the restrictions were lifted and life returned closer to normal, but the delta variant, and a slower pace of vaccinations, have disrupted the recovery.

In pockets of Oregon, particularly in counties with lower vaccination rates, new virus cases are placing a strain on hospitals.

More than half of all patients hospitalized at CHI St. Anthony Hospital in Pendleton as of Tuesday had tested positive for COVID-19, according to a hospital spokeswoman.

The hospitalizations come as Umatilla County reported one of the largest surges of virus cases in Oregon — about 8% of the state’s total cases over the past two weeks despite accounting for just 2% of its population. The county’s case rate during that time period was more than seven times higher than Multnomah and Washington counties in the Portland metro area.

Hospitalizations statewide spiked to the highest totals since April on Tuesday with 259, up 52 since Monday, according to the state.

Local hospitals will sometimes refer critically ill patients to other facilities for a higher level of care.

But regional hospitals have been unable to accept transfers because they are full with patients, Emily Smith, the CHI St. Anthony Hospital spokeswoman, said in an email.

For one patient in need of a transfer, health care workers reached out to 15 different hospitals before finding one with an available bed, Smith said.

On Monday, the emergency department’s physician director reported a threefold increase in patients testing positive in the department over the past five days, Smith said. On Friday and Saturday alone, approximately 40% of patients who came to the hospital with COVID-19 symptoms tested positive. None had been vaccinated against the virus.

Health officials say the surge in Umatilla County is largely due to social gatherings and large summer events that have ensued since the state lifted restrictions.

Umatilla County has one of the lowest vaccination rates in Oregon, with fewer than 40% of residents fully vaccinated, according to the CDC. The county reported 112 new virus cases on Tuesday, a total that included cases from Saturday through Monday, according to county officials.

Gary Warner of the Oregon Capital Bureau contributed to this report.

# Brewery: ‘We’re excited to branch off and do our own thing’

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the accurate term for the column, the name is still a call to place to honor the community and its history.

Obelisk Beer is planned to be a small taproom on Bond Street, the building that housed the Blitz-Weinhard Brewing Co. distribution warehouse in the 1940s and then three family generations of Columbia Fruit and Produce.

The relatively small-scale brewery will produce 10 barrels each time it brews, resulting in 310 gallons.

Coyne said Obelisk will likely host a food option as well, though he’s not yet sure what that will look like.

“We hope to have a comfortable and eclectic gathering space inside,” Coyne said.

Lampson said he and Coyne are passionate about volunteerism and raising funds for local nonprofits.

“We hope to use this space



Obelisk Beer Co.

Obelisk Beer Co. is planned for the Bond Street building that housed the Blitz-Weinhard Brewing Co. distribution warehouse in the 1940s.

to benefit the community,” Lampson said. “That’s a core tenant to craft breweries and we’re excited to become an asset to the community.”

The Obelisk project caused during the start of the coronavirus pandemic but has picked up since. Lampson and Coyne tentatively plan to open in 2022, depending on the schedule with permits and construction.

“Where we’re at is we’ve worked on financing and

we’ve signed a lease for the building and submitted permit applications for the city in order to begin the buildout,” Lampson said. “From here moving forward we would start construction when we’re able to complete all necessary permitting.”

After working together closely at Fort George Brewery, the two decided to start their own venture.

Lampson was at Fort George for about six years,

most recently as the marketing and sales director. After Coyne got a degree in illustration, he wanted to get a job in something he cared about while also doing freelance artwork. He’d been homebrewing for years and was interested in getting into the brewery industry, so he joined Fort George in 2013.

He’s worked in several areas at Fort George over the years, from the brewery side to packaging, selling and running a barrel program with a small, test-batch system. He said he got plenty of creative freedom while doing research and development, and still works for Fort George as barrel manager, R&D brewer and illustrator.

“It was great working with Nathan on those projects,” Coyne said. “Now we’re excited to branch off and do our own thing.”

At Fort George, they worked with nonprofits and farmers directly and want to carry on that tradition.

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