

IN BRIEF

Unemployment rate declined in August

Clatsop County's unemployment rate was 5.8% in August.

The seasonally adjusted rate was down from 6.3% in July and down from 9.1% from August 2020.

The state's unemployment rate was 4.9% in August, according to the Oregon Employment Department, compared to 5.2% nationwide.

— *The Astorian*

Virus claims five more lives in Pacific County

LONG BEACH, Wash. — The coronavirus claimed the lives of five more Pacific County residents in the past week, while new cases continued to be spread throughout the county during what's easily been the most sustained outbreak of the pandemic.

Pacific County Health and Human Services Director Katie Lindstrom confirmed that the COVID-19 death toll sat at 27 as of Monday. Two of the most recently reported deaths included individuals in their 30s and 40s, Lindstrom said.

As of Monday, 1,748 cases have been reported in the county since the pandemic began, up 68 over the past week. Five more hospitalizations have also been reported.

Pacific County prosecutor resigns

SOUTH BEND, Wash. — Departing after little over a year, Pacific County Prosecutor Ben Haslam submitted his formal resignation to Pacific County Commissioners on Friday. He will continue to fill the role in the coming weeks while the county looks to fill the vacancy.

Haslam was appointed prosecutor in August 2020 after the abrupt resignation of former prosecutor Mark McClain. He was first hired in 2018 by McClain to serve as deputy prosecutor and coroner before being selected to be McClain's successor by Commissioners Lisa Olsen, Michael Runyon and Frank Wolfe.

Haslam said he is leaving primarily for personal reasons and to be closer to family.

"I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to serve as the Pacific County prosecutor for the last year," Haslam said. "I have cherished my time here; this is a truly special community and place. I look forward to working with my office and the county commissioners to ensure a smooth transition to my successor."

F/V Laura Marie sinks at port

ILWACO, Wash. — A commercial fishing vessel sank last week at the Port of Ilwaco.

The F/V Laura Marie, a 50-foot, wood-hulled commercial fishing vessel, sank at about 6:45 a.m. Thursday while moored at dock 'C' in the marina.

The vessel, last registered to Robert John McGiviny, had been homeported in Ilwaco since 2008, and will likely be a total loss, according to port officials.

— *Chinook Observer*

DEATH

Sept. 22, 2021

BARNARD, Marilyn Frances, 82, of Warrenton, died in Warrenton. Caldwell's Luce-Layton Mortuary in Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

ON THE RECORD

Assault

Eduardo Montero Luna, 61, of Astoria, was arrested on Monday on U.S. Highway 101 Business in Astoria for assault in the second degree, unlawful use of a weapon, menacing, strangulation and interfering with making a police report. When he arrived at the Clatsop County Jail, Luna was additionally charged with supplying contraband.

David Benjamin Vickery, 36, of Warrenton, was arrested Monday on S. Main Avenue in Warrenton for assault in the fourth degree constituting domestic abuse and kidnapping in the second degree.

Criminal mischief

Miles Joseph Hunsinger, 56, of Astoria, was indicted on Tuesday for criminal mischief in the first degree and dis-

orderly conduct in the second degree. The crimes allegedly occurred in late August.

DUII

Mikayla Anne Greely, 28, of Astoria, was arrested Saturday on Commercial Street in Astoria for driving under the influence of intoxicants and reckless driving.

Hector Fletes, 33 of Astoria, was arrested Saturday at 11th and Exchange streets in Astoria for DUII and reckless driving. He was also cited for failing to install an ignition interlock device, refusing a breath test and driving uninsured.

Norbel Lopez Sereno, 36, of Astoria, was arrested on Saturday at Marine Drive and 30th Street for DUII. He was also cited for driving without driving privileges.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

THURSDAY

Sunset Empire Transportation District Board, 9 a.m., (electronic meeting).

Cannon Beach Planning Commission, 6 p.m., (electronic meeting).

the Astorian

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SHARKY



Seaside Aquarium

The Seaside Aquarium documented a 4-foot salmon shark that washed ashore in Arch Cape. 'Luckily, it was still in great condition and we were able to recover the shark,' the aquarium said in an email. 'It will be dissected by a local school group and samples will be taken to help scientists learn more about these amazing creatures.'

County records 26th virus death

The Astorian

Clatsop County reported a 26th death related to the coronavirus.

An 84-year-old woman died Saturday at her residence. The county said she was not vaccinated against the virus.

No other information was immediately available.

Firefighters: Incentives unlikely to persuade them

Continued from Page A1

"Fast attention we will not be able to provide should this mandate eviscerate our fire department roster."

Charles Boyle, a spokesman for Brown, told The Astorian in an email that the governor's goal is to keep schools, businesses and communities open. He said unvaccinated people in the workplace put themselves and everyone around them at risk.

"If critical first responders are quarantined or hospitalized for COVID-19, who will be left to respond to emergencies in rural communities?" he asked.

The Warrenton Fire Department has three paid staff and 20 volunteers. Fire Chief Brian Alsbury said in an interview that the number could drop into the single digits if — as indicated — most of the unvaccinated firefighters refuse a vaccine and a few vaccinated firefighters quit in solidarity.

Firefighters are not easily replaceable. Many months are required to become trained and certified to fight fires and respond to medical emergencies. The field is also experiencing a shortage of volunteers.

"We don't have 100 people knocking on our door after the 18th trying to sign up and be a volunteer," Alsbury said. "And even if we did, it would be four to five months before — or even up to a year before — they're ready to start providing services to members of the community."

Alsbury and Balensifer doubted any incentives are likely to persuade unvaccinated firefighters to get the vaccine by the deadline.

"Make no mistake," Bal-

ensifer said, "if those numbers come true, if everybody follows through with their word ... that's gonna be a rude awakening for everybody."

He said people in Warrenton with serious medical conditions who find themselves needing to dial 911 "may be at significant risk of dying because there may not be somebody able to respond in time ... It's that big of a deal."

Alsbury worries that if what may happen in Warrenton happens in other regional fire departments, it will disrupt the mutual aid system. He may have a harder time, he said, both receiving help from other fire districts and sending firefighters elsewhere because he will feel the need to focus on his area — "not saying that we won't, it's just a bummer that we're in that position."

Both Balensifer and Alsbury said they are vaccinated against COVID-19. The fire chief was eager to get the vaccine.

"I thought to myself, 'There's no question I'm going to get the vaccine, not only for myself personally and my family, but also as the department head and a leader,'" he recalled. "If the leader and the department head is not taking a vaccine, how are you going to expect anyone else to do it?"

He believes Brown issued the vaccine mandate "for the betterment of Oregon and keeping everyone healthy." But he feels that, where volunteer firefighters are concerned, the consequences were not fully considered.

"We have a lot to do every day," Alsbury said, "and this is going to make it even harder."

Director: Some of the disconnect stems from a necessary response to the pandemic

Continued from Page A1

Since she was hired in late 2019 to guide what was then called the Lower Columbia Hispanic Council, Pool Radway has stabilized the nonprofit's financial position and built staff capacity, despite the hardships and complications caused by the coronavirus pandemic, Gilbert said.

Rocio Simmons, a long-time board member who decided to step down this year, has been with the nonprofit since 2004. She has volunteered with many of the organization's cultural programs and events, as well as tax preparation assistance. She was involved in the process of interviewing and hiring Pool Radway.

They were looking for someone who would continue the work started by Jorge Gutierrez, a previous director, and who would be able to take on more programs and bring in more grant funding.

"Jenny met the qualifications," Simmons said. "We all felt she was really qualified, and I think she still is. It's just other issues we are having."

Autonomy

For Simmons, the issues boil down to how she felt Pool Radway approaches the board.

Simmons felt the board should have more autonomy and that some of the changes Pool Radway made caused the board to be less available and responsive to the community.

Simmons felt she was given a choice between serving on the board and continuing to be involved with programs and outreach as a regular volunteer. Simmons' passion was in the more direct community involvement, rather than her work on the board. She decided to step down in order to continue volunteering with the organization's programs.

With the facilitation process, "I hope that the board will at least see that they need to listen to the community and to the people that are asking them to do something about it," Simmons said.

Though Pool Radway's decisions sometimes felt abrupt to Simmons, the executive director did bring a high level of expertise, Simmons said.

"She was on top of everything and making a lot of good, new changes," Simmons said.

Still, with the other board members who stepped down this year, she believed Pool Radway should be replaced.

Patricia Morrissey and Fernando Rodriguez, co-founders of Consejo Hispano and board members who also stepped down, echoed Simmons.

They had been used to being involved in many aspects of the organization. Ultimately, they feel the board needs to do a better job of listening to community concerns. They are frustrated that it took the board so long to respond to their requests for a mediator.

"I think there is a disconnect between the board and the community," Morrissey said.

Esther Perez, who is active in the Hispanic community, drafted a petition in March calling for Pool Radway to step down and gathered more than 100 signatures. During interactions with Pool Radway, she felt disrespected, she told The Astorian.

In the petition, she wrote that Pool Radway's "way of dealing with members of the Hispanic community, other agencies, the staff and board members has been unfit."

She noted the departure of four board members and the resignation of a former

staff member. She accused Pool Radway of not being responsive to questions from the board and of making disparaging remarks.

Perez asked the board to replace Pool Radway.

Gilbert told The Astorian the board investigated the claims made against Pool Radway. They interviewed staff and others and found nothing.

Pool Radway disputes the claims made in the petition. Others who serve the same community said claims and characterizations in the petition are false or taken out of context and that the community is still being served well by Consejo Hispano. It isn't clear to them that all of the people who signed the petition fully knew what they were signing or if some had ever had direct interactions with Pool Radway.

Pool Radway feels the issues were born out of personality clashes, a difference in leadership and management styles and, to some extent, cultural differences.

'I THINK THERE IS A DISCONNECT BETWEEN THE BOARD AND THE COMMUNITY.'

Patricia Morrissey |

co-founder of

Consejo Hispano and a board member who stepped down

Some of the perceived disconnect stems from a necessary response to the pandemic, she and others said. Staff was not able to be in people's homes in the same way or available in-person at the office.

"It does hurt that we're not in the office," Pool Radway said.

She had hoped to fully reopen the office in August, but decided against it as the delta variant caused virus cases to surge across the county. Some staff were not comfortable returning in-person, she said.

Since the pandemic began, Consejo Hispano has moved some programs online and tried to engage with people through tools like Facebook Live. This has been challenging, though. Not everyone the organization is trying to reach has access to technology or is comfortable using it.

Also, Pool Radway said, it is not how the Hispanic community here tends to connect.

Ally

Though she is moving on, Pool Radway hopes to continue to be an ally for Consejo Hispano and an advocate at the state and national levels through her work at Causa.

She is not leaving immediately. Causa's interim executive director, Isa Peña, is leaving to become the new director of strategy at Innovation Law Lab, an Oregon-based organization focused on immigrant and refugee justice issues and resources.

To ease the difficulty of the shift, both women plan to make gradual transitions to their new organizations over the next several months.

Aitor Porro, Consejo Hispano's assistant director, will serve as interim executive director.

"I have complete confidence in the board of Consejo Hispano and the staff and that they will continue doing the best job possible for the community," Pool Radway said.