

## IN BRIEF

## Cleanup underway after collapse of East Mooring Basin causeway

Cleanup is underway on the collapsed causeway at the East Mooring Basin.

After receiving emergency authorization, the Port of Astoria contracted Bergerson Construction for the job. Debris is being pulled from the water, loaded onto a barge and taken to Bergerson's location at Tongue Point.

Will Isom, the Port's executive director, said the estimated cost of cleanup is \$100,000. He expects the work will take a couple of weeks.

The northernmost point of the aging causeway collapsed on Sept. 21. The Port closed the causeway in 2018 due to a rotting substructure.

Isom said removing debris from the water is the Port's priority.

"The longer that sits in the water, especially with the weight of the concrete debris, the more it will settle and be difficult to remove," he said. "As the tide moves, portions of the causeway could move and cause damage to other property in the area."

During the collapse, a breaker box was damaged, taking out power on the breakwater. Isom said the Port is also focused on returning long-term power to tenants.

They are only removing the portion of the causeway that failed, Isom said, as the emergency authorization is only for materials in the water. Improvements to the rest of the causeway will be addressed later.

"Right now, we are focused on the most immediate problems," he said. "I think the fallout from this and dealing with ancillary-type issues are something that will be easier to determine a little bit further down the road."

## Lightship Columbia heading out for repairs

The Lightship Columbia, the largest exhibit at the Columbia River Maritime Museum, will temporarily close to visitors starting on Tuesday.

The ship will be towed to Portland on Oct. 8, where it will be inspected, cleaned and repaired. In addition, the engine room and several below-deck areas, which have been closed to the public since 1979, will be restored and turned into new exhibit spaces.

The Lightship Columbia is expected to return to the Astoria museum in early 2022.

## Clatsop County school districts receive technology funding

Two school districts in Clatsop County received funding from the Federal Communications Commission for broadband connectivity and technological devices.

The Warrenton-Hammond School District will receive \$123,005 and the Jewell School District will receive \$7,081 as a part of the first round of funding.

A second application window that will provide funding for technological equipment and services closes on Oct. 13.

— The Astorian

## ON THE RECORD

## Burglary

• Amilcar Carrillo Tomas, 24, of Seaside, was indicted on July 8 for two counts of burglary in the first degree, two counts of coercion, three counts of unlawful use of a weapon, menacing, menacing constituting domestic violence, assault in the fourth degree constituting domestic violence, two counts of harassment and three counts of violating a court's stalking protective

order. The alleged crimes occurred in late June.

## Unlawful use of a weapon

• Titus Owei Kolokolo, Sr., 31, of Portland, was indicted on April 8 for unlawful use of a weapon, menacing, attempted assault in the third degree, harassment, disorderly conduct in the second degree and tampering with physical evidence. The alleged crimes occurred in Clatsop County in April.

## PUBLIC MEETINGS

## MONDAY

**Clatsop Community College Board**, 5:30 p.m., board retreat, (electronic meeting).

**Astoria City Council and Astoria Development Commission**, 7 p.m., City Hall, 1095 Duane St.

## TUESDAY

**Seaside Community Center Commission**, 10 a.m., 1225 Avenue A.

**Port of Astoria Commission**, 4 p.m., (electronic meeting).

**Seaside Library Board of Directors**, 4:30 p.m., 1131 Broadway.

**Clatsop Care Health District Board of Directors**, 5 p.m., (electronic meeting).

**Astoria Library Board**, 5:30 p.m., 450 10th St.

**Seaside Planning Commission**, 6 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway

## the Astorian

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Nellie Hux

The multiyear, multimillion-dollar restoration of the North Head Lighthouse at Cape Disappointment State Park is essentially complete.

## Homebuilders push back on state plan for wildfire protection

By CASSANDRA PROFITA

Oregon Public Broadcasting

The green metal roof on Mary Bradshaw's house gleams amid scorched earth and dead, blackened trees. All of the surrounding homes burned in last year's Beachie Creek fire in Santiam Canyon, but hers was untouched.

"We were shocked," Bradshaw said. "Having seen what the fire did, we really didn't expect it to be standing."

It's a shining example of how home-hardening measures can prevent houses from burning, even when they're surrounded by fire. Bradshaw and her husband built their home with concrete siding, a cement porch, no gutters or air vents on the metal roof, and no vegetation near the house. Those are all key fireproofing measures that experts recommend.

"We built it with fire in mind, although we never thought we would have a fire," Bradshaw said.

Oregon leaders are hoping some of these measures will help save homes from burning in future wildfires as summers in the West get hotter, drier and more fire-prone. But they have been the most controversial part of a sweeping new wildfire protection plan, facing pushback from property owners and homebuilding and agricultural industries.

In a compromise of sorts, those groups, along with others, will now spend the next year advising state agencies on how to map out the state's most fire-prone areas and determine where the home-hardening rules will be required.

## Raging wildfires

California has mandated wildfire building codes in high-risk areas for more than a decade, but it's an outlier. A National Public Radio analysis last year found most states don't require rebuilding with fire-resistant materials, and homebuilder associations have mounted stiff opposition to do so.

That happened in Oregon when officials first pushed for wildfire building codes several years ago. The Oregon Home Builders Association testified the measures would add substantial cost to a home's price, even though other assessments found fire-resistant homes would be minimally higher or even cheaper. The state did approve fire mitigation codes in 2019 but left them optional.

Then last year, rag-



Kristyna Wentz-Graff/Oregon Public Broadcasting

Mary Bradshaw's fire-hardened home in Elkhorn was one of the few in the area that survived the Beachie Creek fire.

ing wildfires in Oregon destroyed thousands of homes and killed nine people.

The wave of unprecedented destruction prompted lawmakers to pass a wide-ranging \$200 million wildfire bill to prevent another such catastrophe. It also includes more firefighting capacity, expanded forest management plans and clean air shelters to protect vulnerable people from smoke.

"I don't think any of us will forget the horror as we saw towns burned overnight, thousands evacuated their homes, leaving behind all of their belongings," Gov. Kate Brown said in signing the bill into law. "We were simply not equipped to fight the fires of this new age, which are faster and more fierce and fueled by the impacts of climate change."

State Sen. Jeff Golden, the Ashland Democrat who led the effort to pass the bill, said it's important to know what parts of the state are most at risk from wildfire and prioritize action in those areas.

"Nobody's even beginning to think we're going to eliminate wildfire going forward but just reduce risks and protect communities," he said. "We're fighting for our survival in a very real way, and there's a lot of trends working against us."

Fire-risk maps will have the biggest influence over which areas will see the strictest fire-safe building codes for new construction, Golden said. There will also be requirements for clearing out flammable material around homes.

A key sticking point will come down to defining the so-called wildland-urban

interface, where residential areas meet forests and rangelands. It's the fastest-growing land use type and that, along with the warmer climate, is raising wildfire risk for communities across the country.

"We are looking for a balance between letting people do exactly what they want on their private property and responding to this existential threat," Golden said.

During the legislative session, critics from real estate, construction and agricultural industries again sounded alarms. They worried broad restrictions would increase costs for property owners, homebuilders and farmers and infringe on private property rights.

"If Sen. Golden thinks for a minute I'm going to cut down the 200-year-old, 200-foot-tall, old growth ponderosa pine in my yard he is mistaken," state Sen. Betsy Johnson, D-Scappoose, said on a radio show. "I'm just not sure I want unseen, unaccountable, unelected bureaucrats dictating the future of the state of Oregon and how we all are going to live on our own property."

Opponents of the new rules are on the advisory committees that will help figure out where to require them. They include Mark Long, CEO of the Oregon Home Builders Association,

and Dave Hunnicutt, president of the Oregon Property Owners Association. Hunnicutt said he worries the rules will not be applied narrowly enough.

"We have a proposed definition of wildland-urban interface that will essentially include the entire state of Oregon," he said.

## 'Home ignition zone'

Meanwhile, a new program has already launched — with \$11 million in funding from the new law — to clear flammable brush from the "home ignition zone" in wildland-urban interface areas.

Jeff Parker, the executive director of Northwest Youth Corps, said many communities have natural areas loaded with excess fuel that could send a fire burning faster and hotter toward nearby homes.

His workforce training group usually pays young people to clear weeds or build trails in wilderness areas, but now it will be spending more time in neighborhoods, basically doing extreme yardwork.

"Our objective here is to ... make sure our community has resiliency," Parker said. "So if a fire does roll through, it doesn't have the catastrophic impact, the mass displacement of people and the impact on the community."

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