

Johnson to run for governor

Scappoose Democrat will become independent

By ERICK BENGEL
The Astorian

State Sen. Betsy Johnson, the influential co-chairwoman of the Joint Ways and Means Committee, is running for governor next year as an independent.

The Scappoose Democrat made the announcement in an email to supporters on Thursday.

“Oregonians are eager for a fresh start and new leadership,” she wrote. “But having to choose between another left-wing liberal promising more of the same or a right-wing Trump apologist — is no choice at all. Oregonians deserve better than the excesses and nonsense of the extreme left and radical right. Oregonians are ready to move to the middle where sensible solutions are found.”

“That’s why I have decided to run for governor as an independent leader unaffiliated with any party and loyal only to the people of Oregon.”

Johnson said in a statement that she would raise money and start assembling staff and supporters before formally announcing her campaign early next year.

By early March, Johnson will have to give up her membership in the Democratic Party to run as an unaffiliated candidate. Without party backing, she will need to collect at least 23,744 signatures by next

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Weber steps into Senate campaign

Tillamook Republican wants to replace Johnson

By ERICK BENGEL
The Astorian

State Rep. Suzanne Weber, the Tillamook Republican who represents state House District 32, will run for state Sen. Betsy Johnson’s seat.

Johnson, a Scappoose Democrat who represents Senate District 16, announced on Thursday that she will run for governor in 2022 as an independent. Late Thursday, Weber announced her Senate campaign in a Facebook video.

Weber edged Debbie Boothe-Schmidt, an Astoria Democrat, for an open House seat in 2020. It marked the first time a Republican had won the North Coast district in almost two decades.

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Anti-food tax signs line the sidewalk along Fir Street in Cannon Beach.

Photos by Lydia Ely/The Astorian

CANNON BEACH PREPS FOR FOOD TAX VOTE

The 5% levy has divided the town

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Astorian

CANNON BEACH — The two women didn’t know each other until they visited the same tiny hair salon in Portland’s Sellwood neighborhood on the same day and got into an argument about a proposed food tax in Cannon Beach.

The women remember the interaction differently, but both felt attacked for their opinions.

Deanna Hammond, the co-owner of the Cannon Beach Bakery, is decidedly against the tax.

Like a number of other restaurant and food-related business owners, Hammond believes the tax would add to her costs. She anticipates having to hire an extra person just to help with bookkeeping if voters pass the tax in the November election.

The city’s proposed 5% tax on prepared food — food meant for immediate consumption, whether to-go, delivered or onsite — is intended to target tourist dollars. The city and the Cannon Beach Rural Fire Protection District would split the revenue generated — an estimated \$1.7 million annually — and the money would help fund operations at the fire district and pay for city infrastructure projects like a new City Hall and police station. The city has pledged some money to businesses to help defray costs associated with collecting the tax.

Hammond supports the fire district and the police department. But — with the coronavirus pandemic, related back-and-forth restrictions on restaurants, the rising cost of food and supplies and a labor shortage — she does not believe this is the time to add to business owners’ burdens.

Deb Atiyeh, the other woman in the Portland salon that day, sees things differently. She stumped in support of the tax proposal for most of the summer and has helped lead a grassroots cam-



Shane Corbin, front, and Sean Corbin, back, the co-owners of Corbins along with Sean’s wife, Crystal, prepare for dinner before doors open.

FOOD TAX

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service and is on track to surpass that number this year. Meanwhile, city offices and operations are housed in a failing building.

In Atiyeh’s mind, the services and city infrastructure the tax revenue could support would benefit everyone. The businesses that don’t support the tax? “I see them as being rather selfish, to be honest with you,” she said.

Residents describe a palpable tension in town over the topic.

But Cannon Beach is not the only Oregon city pursuing a sales tax to carve out a new revenue stream. Newport, just over 100 miles to the south, is going to voters with a 5% prepared food tax. Newport estimated the tax would add around 50 cents to a \$10 meal bill.

In 2019, Hood River, in the Columbia River Gorge, failed to pass a similar tax. The tourist-dependent cities of Ashland and Yachats already have voter-approved taxes on prepared food and nonalcoholic beverages.

Some cities have also looked to their cut of lodging tax dollars. State law dictates how lodging tax money is spent. The bulk must go to tourism

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campaign to get out information to voters. She lives near the fire district’s station and she said the sirens blare constantly. “They’re being crushed by tourism,” she said.

‘Crushed by tourism’

Calls for service rose steeply this year, many of them coming from visitors. Last year, the fire district responded to more than 400 calls for

City sees compliance on council’s vaccine mandate deadline

A few workers have resigned

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Astorian

Most of Astoria’s city employees will be vaccinated against the

coronavirus ahead of Monday’s deadline set by the City Council, but the few resignations the city has seen and an ongoing shortage of workers and volunteer firefighters has departments worried.

One volunteer firefighter, one fire department intern and two employees at the city’s child care facility have resigned because of vaccination mandates enacted by state and city leaders.

At a special meeting on Thursday, the City Council approved a

THE CITY COUNCIL APPROVED A GRACE PERIOD FOR EMPLOYEES WHO HAVE AT LEAST RECEIVED THEIR FIRST DOSE OF VACCINE BY MONDAY.

grace period for employees who have at least received their first dose of vaccine by Monday in order to avoid losing key staff. New hires will be given extra time to get vaccinated, as well.

Gov. Kate Brown required all health care workers, including firefighters, and staff and volunteers in K-12 schools to be vaccinated by Monday. The City Council followed the governor’s announcement with

a vaccine mandate of its own. Police officers are exempt under state law and city employees could apply for religious or medical exemptions.

Besides the handful of resignations, several employees at the Astoria Aquatic Center have yet to show proof of vaccination or update the city on their vaccination status.

The Parks and Recreation Department, which oversees the child care facility and the aquatic

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