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Lydia Ely/The Astorian

Many restaurant owners opposed the food tax.

Cannon Beach food tax leading by slim margin

Some of the revenue would go for emergency response

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Astorian

CANNON BEACH — With most of the vote counted, ballot returns show a controversial food tax passing with less than two dozen votes to spare.

Voters were split 52% to 48%, or 340 votes to 317.

All that remains to be counted are ballots turned in at the drop box at City Hall before the Tuesday night deadline.

“I figured, pass or fail, it would be within votes of each other,” Fire Chief Marc Reckmann said.

Measure 4-210 would levy a 5% tax on prepared food at restaurants and similar businesses. The city would

split the revenue — an estimated \$1.7 million annually — with the Cannon Beach Rural Fire Protection District.

The city’s cut of the money would go to infrastructure projects, including a new City Hall and police station. The fire district, which relies on property tax dollars and grants, would use its portion of the revenue to help fund operations.

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Voters back Knappa school bond measure

Money will finance school improvements

By ETHAN MYERS
The Astorian

Voters in Knappa have backed a \$14 million bond measure that will make improvements to schools.

The measure was passing 68% to 32% with most of the vote counted Tuesday night.

The bond money will fund the construction of a new facility containing several classrooms, a science lab and learning hub at the middle school to replace aging portable units. The money will also go toward constructing a community gym at the elementary school, along with developing space for a new preschool.

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Lydia Ely/The Astorian

A bond measure will finance improvements to Knappa schools.

HERITAGE SQUARE

City reaches out to developers

Workforce housing planned downtown

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Astorian

City leaders took the first concrete step to secure a developer to create workforce housing at Heritage Square.

On Monday night, the City Council, acting as the Astoria Development Commission, authorized staff to issue a request for expressions of interest, a less formal process than a request for proposals that looks to developers to pitch their ideas.

In the document, the city acknowledges that Heritage Square could be particularly difficult to redevelop, but the city is ready to be flexible. The property near City Hall is dominated by a hole where the foundation of an old Safeway collapsed more than a decade ago after heavy rains.

“The commission recognizes that the site can’t accommodate every possible need/desire of the community, and that some uses will likely require supplemental funding,” the document, prepared by city consultant John Southgate, states, “but the commission seeks a developer partner who is open to examining the possibilities.”

Developers will have until Dec. 20 to submit their proposals. It is a quick turnaround for this kind of project and the city will likely see fewer applicants as a result, Southgate said. But a condensed timeline is necessary so any developer selected can pursue key state funding sources before deadlines close.

Redevelopment of Heritage Square has been discussed for years. City councilors have considered various options, including the possibility of building a new library there. The Garden of Surging Waves was dedicated in 2014, but city leaders were torn on how to address the collapsed section of the block immediately adjacent to the park. Some in the community advocated for an amphitheater, while others wanted to see more parking.

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Businesses complain about homeless

Concerns rise after drop-in center opened

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Astorian

Old and familiar tensions are bubbling up on Commercial Street after the opening of a new daytime drop-in center for people who are homeless.

At a meeting Monday, City Councilor Tom Hilton said he’s heard concerns about safety downtown — especially at night — and about homeless people who gather at the Garden of Surging Waves near City Hall and in front of LiFEBoat Services on Commercial.

Two business owners and an employee at another business on Commercial lodged their own complaints with the City Council. They said the crowd that gathers outside of LiFEBoat can be intimidating to customers and pedestrians and is hurting their business.

Sometimes, the people are smoking or drinking. They harass passerby. There have been uncomfortable interactions; feces, urine and trash left behind; people sleeping on the sidewalk or in doorways.

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Breweries along the North Coast outperformed state during pandemic

Volume was up, but revenue dipped

By ABBEY McDONALD
The Astorian

Last year, the impact of the coronavirus pandemic wrapped around Buoy Beer Co.’s Czech Pils cans, which were downgraded to plain silver sheathed in a label rather than printed branding.

“It was really hard to source raw materials,” said David Kroening, Buoy Beer’s president. “(We were) just barely trying to get enough raw materials in place to keep

beer flowing.”

Supply shortages were among several blows to the Oregon craft beer industry during the pandemic. The biggest, however, came when bars and restaurants shut down draft beer sales.

Overall, the state saw a 22% decrease in sales between 2019 and 2020, with brewers selling around 300,000 fewer barrels, according to data from the Oregon Liquor and Cannabis Commission.

Despite the statewide decline, Fort George Brewery and Buoy Beer sold more barrels of beer during the pandemic than before, making the North Coast stand out during a tough year for the industry.

Among more than a dozen breweries with a similar barrel output, less than half increased sales during the pandemic.

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Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Canned beer sales helped Buoy Beer Co. and Fort George Brewery weather the pandemic.

