

# Riverwalk Inn: ‘This is a tremendous opportunity for your city’

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The Port has considered selling the hotel, which wraps around the West Mooring Basin, and leasing the land.

Ganesh Sonpatki, who leases the Riverwalk Inn from the Port through Param Hotel Corp., came before the Port Commission earlier this year with concerns about fixing the imminent structural issues if the hotel was not in the Port's future plans.

Zilis also said they are recommending the removal of the Chinook Building, which is now vacant.

The presentation on Wednesday was an opportunity for the Port, the city and Walker Macy to share potential redevelopment scenarios with the public and hear feedback from the community.

The consultants laid out two potential paths for development. The scenarios included a fish market outside of Bornstein Seafoods, a pavilion, a footbridge and a marina boardwalk with seating and seasonal food carts where the Riverwalk Inn sits. The sketches also showed two spots for new hotels, just south of the Cannery Pier Hotel & Spa and just west of the marina.

How to approach zoning codes, as well as how to manage parking and circulation, were also addressed.

Walker Macy's team reiterated points Will Isom, the Port's executive director, has



The Astoria Riverwalk Inn wraps around the West Mooring Basin.

Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

made about the need to create jobs, help drive the region's economy and craft a plan that is flexible to economic changes.

"It's impact can't be understated," Zilis said. "This is a tremendous opportunity for your city and for your community."

Dozens of residents shared their observations and concerns after hearing the overview.

City Manager Brett Estes said he was pleased with the amount of participation from the public, with around a hundred people tuning in at the high point.

"I just want to thank all the members of the public for their input and I want to thank the advisory committee members and the consultants for what, I think, is a very creative and visionary approach to look at potential new uses and activities at the Port," Mayor Bruce Jones said. "I

am really impressed by this and on behalf of the City Council, I know we are all looking forward to future discussions with the Port commissioners and the council after the next iteration comes forward after any changes based on the public input."

The Port and the city

posted slides from the presentation on their websites with the option to submit comments.

After considering the public feedback, the Port, city and consulting firm will host another meeting in December and present their preferred option.



Lydia Ely/The Astorian

A 5% food tax would help finance emergency response and a new City Hall.

## Food tax: Election results are expected to be certified on Nov. 22

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Only 100 ballots remain to be counted for the food tax and a Knappa school bond measure, according to County Clerk Tracie Krevanko.

Most of the remaining ballots are ones that could not be read by the county's voting machines because they were damaged, among other reasons. A few other ballots did not pass the county's signature verification process. Letters went out to those voters and people will have until Nov. 16 to cure their ballots.

Krevanko expects to certify the election results on Nov. 22.

Besides the possibility of an automatic recount, people have until Dec. 7 to request a recount of their own. They just have to pay for it. The cost comes to \$15 per precinct, and Cannon Beach is a single precinct. Anyone demanding a recount would also need to pay some additional fees associated with county expenses, such as bringing in workers to do the recount.

On election night, with

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Brandon Ogilvie | Cannon Beach city councilor

the vote so close, Fire Chief Marc Reckmann said he expected the results will be challenged.

The fire district is considering a levy in May if the food tax fails. Funded through property tax dollars and grants, the district is in dire need of increased, stable funding, Reckmann has said.

The food tax has been controversial. The measure would levy a 5% tax on prepared food purchased at restaurants and similar businesses and is expected to raise an estimated \$1.7 million annually. The revenue would be split between

the fire district and the city, which intends to use its share to fund a new City Hall and police station and other infrastructure.

Proponents say the tax is a way to target visitor dollars and spread the burden of paying for city and emergency services without raising property taxes for residents. Calls for emergency services have increased in the past two years, with most of the calls generated by visitors.

But opponents questioned the timing of the ballot measure, saying it will hurt businesses that are already struggling

to recover amid the coronavirus pandemic. Others have expressed distrust with the city and how it will spend its cut of the revenue.

The City Council had considered passing the measure as an ordinance, but a majority moved to send it to voters instead. City Councilor Brandon Ogilvie was the deciding vote at that meeting in July. He changed his mind on the ordinance and shifted to the ballot measure.

Though he fully supported the food tax, Ogilvie said he ultimately felt it would be best for the community to decide. It was also possible that even if the City Council had favored an ordinance, citizens could petition to force an election, he noted.

He knows the tax has been divisive, but he does not regret changing his vote.

"I need to do the job that I was elected to do," he said. "It's a little difficult to bring people together that completely disagree on an issue. That it's this divided doesn't make it any easier. But my main goal is to try to get the city's business done."

## Code changes: ‘We just want to make the criteria really clear’

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Hollander, Henningsgaard contends, made no effort at all. He sat on the property and the permits until 2020 and then claimed economic hardship because of the pandemic.

The city code, following a section that discusses the ways an applicant can show they're making an effort, says: "In lieu of compliance with Section 2.c above, the applicant may demonstrate that poor economic conditions exist in the market that would advise against proceeding with the project."

Henningsgaard and Megan Leatherman, the city's community development director, are still hashing through exactly what needs to change in the code language. Henningsgaard thinks they will need to drop "in lieu of."

Leatherman says there may be a switch from "may" to "must."

"We just want to make the criteria really clear on when we would approve (an extension) versus when

the City Council would deny one," Leatherman said.

Astoria's code has some quirks and a somewhat unusual order of operations for developers, Henningsgaard acknowledged.

While those quirks and processes are understood, or at least anticipated, among local planners who know who to call if they have questions, the order may not be something the state took into consideration.

City staff refined this troublesome section of code in the past in response to another legal challenge, but that was years ago, City Manager Brett Estes said. Hollander's appeal was the first time someone had challenged the current version.

It is probably time to provide more clarity, Estes said.

While the city amends the code to guide future projects, the Oregon Court of Appeals will weigh whether the state was correct in reversing the city's denial of the permit extension for Hollander's hotel.

## Poll: Only 45% of parents support a vaccine mandate for children 12 and older

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Oregonians living in urban areas are more likely than people in rural parts of the state to support vaccine mandates for children 12 and older.

Two-thirds of those living in the Portland metro area support vaccine mandates for children 12 and older, while less than half of those living outside other the metro area and Willamette Valley support a mandate.

Oregonians ages 65 and older are also significantly more likely than people between the ages of 18 and 44 to support vaccine mandates for children 12 and older.

Only 45% of parents support a vaccine mandate for children 12 and older. "This is likely indica-

tive of continued concerns over long-term side effects of vaccination, as well as a lower probability of severe symptoms and hospitalization among infected children," the organization said.

Donna Casey called mask and vaccine mandates a "no-brainer."

As a mother of a senior at Summit High School in Bend and a statistician who spent over a decade teaching at Central Oregon Community College, Casey believes they are simple measures to protect more people from dying. She called opposition to the mask mandate from parents and school boards selfish.

"We're talking about people's lives here, and that doesn't seem to be the main focus," she said.