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LOCAL AGENCIES PARTNER ON WARMING CENTER IN SEASIDE

Low-barrier shelter to open in December

By R.J. MARX
The Astorian

SEASIDE — A new warming center will give homeless people an alternative to sleeping outside in the cold.

The 15-bed, low-barrier shelter on S. Roosevelt Drive will open on Dec. 1. The outreach is a combined project between Helping Hands Reentry Outreach Centers, the city, Clatsop Community Action and the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District.

The warming center was announced in a year of prioritizing homeless issues, with the goal of transitional and permanent housing for people in need. Recommendations from city, county and nonprofit leaders delivered to the City Council prior to Monday's meeting

sought to define and implement strategies to address homelessness.

In February, a warming center proposed at the former Broadway Middle School — now the Sunset Recreation Center — was rejected by the park district's board. With the approach of another winter, a shelter remained a priority.

"Low barrier means they could have had a drink that day. They could have used (drugs) that day," said Alan Evans, of Helping Hands. "They can come to the facility, but they can't come to the facility and drink and use (drugs) at the facility."

The warming center, which will open in winter months during inclement weather, is fully funded for at least one year, Evans said.

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Lydia Ely/The Astorian

BACKGROUND: The Astoria Warming Center is based out of the First United Methodist Church above downtown.

Warming center preps for season

A low-barrier emergency shelter at First United Methodist Church

By ERICK BENGEL
The Astorian

The Astoria Warming Center, a place that provides overnight shelter for homeless people during the months of wintry weather, plans to open for its eighth season on Monday.

Hours will run 7 p.m. to 8 a.m. As usual, supper will be served and showers will be on offer.

This will be the warming center's second season of having to work around the coronavirus. By this point, the crew and clientele have adjusted to a setting with masks, temperature checks, sleeping mats spaced 6 feet apart and other pandemic protocols.

The warming center is hoping gradually to bring back volunteer positions.

When COVID arrived, the center had to do away with most volunteers and move almost entirely to paid staff. This was partly to reduce the number of people coming in and out of the space — the basement of the First United Methodist Church at Franklin Avenue and 11th Street — and partly because the volunteer base skewed older, a demographic especially vulnerable to the virus.

On Sunday, the board of directors' meeting will be an open house, held virtually at 4 p.m., for anyone who wants to talk to board members about donating their time.

The board itself, which is all volunteer, is also looking to fill roles.

Billie Delaney, the warming center coordinator, said the organization is "at an evolving place with COVID. I don't think any of us can know where COVID will be a month into the season."

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Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Astoria draws drinking water from the Bear Creek watershed.

Water break prompts call to conserve

Transmission line tied to watershed

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Astorian

Residents and businesses were urged to limit water use after the city reported a break in the transmission line from the Astoria watershed Friday morning.

The city asked people to only use the amount of water required for normal, daily routines. City staff planned to reach out to Astoria breweries, which are among the highest water users, and ask them to conserve water as much as possible during this time.

The break impacts Astoria and the outlying water districts the watershed serves, including Willowdale, Fernhill, John Day, Olney, Walluski, Riverpoint and Williamsport.

The city advised water customers in Willowdale, Fernhill, John Day, Olney, Walluski, Riverpoint and around the Clatsop County Fairgrounds to boil all water before using until further notice.

"While the danger to public health is low, we are taking all necessary precautions to ensure the safety and health of the public," Eric Bufkin, the city's water quality supervisor, said in a statement.

The city stores water in four different areas and typically has more than a week's worth of water on hand, but past breaks

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In Warrenton, the daffodil is the new city flower

City Commission votes to replace phlox

By ETHAN MYERS
The Astorian

WARRENTON — Phlox is out. The City Commission voted unanimously on Tuesday to make the daffodil the city flower.

Spruce Up Warrenton, a nonprofit that seeks to beautify the city, advocated for the change. "When

you drive down the Oregon Coast, or you start to get close to this area, you just see them everywhere," Jeanne Smith, the chairwoman of Spruce Up, said of the daffodil. "It is just a flower that pops up ... People's front yards, on the side of the highway, they're just everywhere. They just grow like crazy — places you wouldn't even think a flower could grow, they're there."

In an emergency declaration back in 1927, the city adopted an ordinance making phlox the official flower.

City Commissioner Rick Newton was unsure why the city declared an emergency, but noted the city used to have many bizarre

regulations and ordinances that seemingly had no explanation.

The daffodil has some history in Warrenton. While not native to the North Coast, Newton said daffodil bulbs were raised in vast fields for export prior to World War II.

"With the phlox, for most people, unless they're a major gardener, they have no clue what that flower is," Smith said.

Spruce Up will plant daffodil bulbs on Saturday morning along walking trails. They have discussed making a sign detailing the flower's history.

Smith said they hope to "have them popping up everywhere when you enter into Warrenton."



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Daffodils are often seen in the spring on the North Coast.



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