

IN BRIEF

Warrenton hires consultant for wastewater master plan

WARRENTON — City commissioners voted on Tuesday to hire Kennedy Jenks Consultants, out of Portland, to develop a master plan for wastewater treatment facilities.

The city will pay the firm \$246,880 for the task.

In recent years, Warrenton leaders have warned that the city's wastewater treatment plant could reach capacity by 2022. The plan will outline recommended improvements to the city's collection system and treatment plant.

State discloses more virus cases at local schools

The Oregon Health Authority has disclosed three new coronavirus cases at schools in Clatsop County.

Two of the cases were students at Lewis and Clark Elementary School. The other case was a student at Jewell School.

The health authority, meanwhile, reported seven new virus cases for the county on Wednesday and six new virus cases on Tuesday. Since the pandemic began, the county had recorded 2,520 virus cases as of Wednesday.

— *The Astorian*

'Faulty' science used by Trump appointees to cut spotted owl habitat

Political appointees in the Trump administration relied on faulty science to justify stripping habitat protections for the imperiled northern spotted owl, U.S. wildlife officials said Tuesday as they struck down a rule that would have opened millions of acres of West Coast forest to potential logging.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reversed a decision made five days before President Donald Trump left office to drastically shrink so-called critical habitat for the spotted owl. The small, reclusive bird has been in decline for decades as old-growth forests were cut in Oregon, Washington state and California.

Government biologists objected to the changes under Trump and warned they would put the spotted owl on a path to extinction, documents show.

But Trump's Interior Secretary David Bernhardt and former Fish and Wildlife Service Director Aurelia Skipwith dismissed those concerns — instead adopting a plan to lift restrictions on more land than even the timber industry had sought.

— *Associated Press*

DEATHS

Nov. 10, 2021

CAPELLEN, Judith Gale, 79, of Seaside, died in Seaside. Ocean View Funeral & Cremation Service of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

Nov. 9, 2021

ELLIOTT, Marsha Sue, 71, of Astoria, died in Portland. Caldwell's Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

arrangements.

Nov. 8, 2021

BANDEEN, Jay, 62, of Warrenton, died in Seaside. Hughes-Ransom Mortuary is in charge of the arrangements.

Nov. 7, 2021

SAWYER, Nancy, 70, of Astoria, died in Astoria. Hughes-Ransom Mortuary is in charge of the arrangements.

CORRECTION

Incorrect last name — Casper Leding was the Astoria police chief in 1946. His last name was incorrectly spelled Seding on B1 in Water Under the Bridge on Nov. 2.

ON THE RECORD

Misuse of 911

• Michelle Lynn Auser, 43, of Astoria, was arrested on Wednesday on Cedar Street in Astoria for misuse of 911, resisting arrest, aggravated harassment, assaulting a public safety officer and criminal mischief in the third degree.

Theft

• Christopher Leslie Reasor, 38, of North

Bend, was arrested on Monday at Walmart in Warrenton for theft in the second degree and criminal mischief in the third degree.

DUII

• Jason Ray Bruton, 33, of Astoria, was arrested on Tuesday at Alternate U.S. Highway 101 and S. Main Avenue in Warrenton for driving under the influence of intoxicants.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

MONDAY

Warrenton Marinas Advisory Committee, 2 p.m., special meeting, Warrenton Marina Office, 501 N.E. Harbor Place.

Jewell School District Board, 6 p.m., Jewell School Library, 83874 Highway 103.

Astoria City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 1095 Duane St.

TUESDAY

Astoria Historic Landmarks Commission, 5:30 p.m., City Hall, 1095 Duane St.

Seaside School District Board, 6 p.m., (electronic meeting).

the Astorian

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Rain, floods prompt rescues in Northwest

By GILLIAN FLACCUS
Associated Press

The U.S. Coast Guard used two helicopters to rescue campers from rising waters at an RV park on the Oregon Coast on Friday, mudslides shut down roads and a woman was plucked from a swollen river as a second day of heavy rains and flooding pummeled the Pacific Northwest.

Authorities issued flood watches along the coast and warned of the possibility of dangerous mudslides in areas that burned in last summer's devastating wildfires. At the RV park in Neskowin, Coast Guard teams said they had rescued a dozen people and three dogs on Friday and that local responders had evacuated eight people.

Photos showed RVs sitting in water about 6 inches deep and water covering the campground and parking areas. In some areas of the park, water had risen to 4 feet, the Statesman Journal reported. In nearby Otis, another RV park was also flooded and a private fire engine that sits permanently at the town limits to welcome visitors had water halfway up its doors.



Sgt. Jack Dunteman/Lincoln County Sheriff's Office
A fire engine was surrounded by rising waters in Otis on Friday.

Russ Hiner, who was camping at the park, posted on Facebook that he awoke to someone driving around the park and honking a warning shortly after 6 a.m.

"Looking out the fogged up windows and see someone with a flashlight running around. They come and bang on the door, 'The park is FLOODING! Everyone out,'" he wrote on Facebook. "Looks like there's 6 or 7 inches of standing water underneath us."

The Neskowin campground is tucked between two forks of Neskowin Creek and is about 7 miles north of Otis, a tiny coastal community that was devas-

tated by a wind-driven wildfire just over a year ago.

"We are OK for now ... but the rain is still coming," said Melynda Small, who lost her home to the fire in September 2020 and is worried about mudslides in the burn area.

Forecasters said the storms are being caused by an atmospheric river, known as the Pineapple Express. Rain was expected to remain heavy in Oregon and Washington state through Friday night. Precipitation may ease some Saturday but more rain is expected Saturday night through next week.

In Oregon, the National Weather Service issued flood

watches in several coastal counties and warned that heavy rains raised the risk of mudslides and debris flows in areas recently burned by wildfires.

More than 2 inches of rain fell in some areas in the western part of the state in a 24-hour period Thursday and heavy rains were expected to continue through Friday evening, the National Weather Service in Portland said. Astoria, in the state's far northwest corner, set a new record for rainfall Thursday with just over 2 inches of rain, the most since the previous record for the date set 70 years ago.

Standing water in the roadways made driving treacherous across the Portland metro area and a woman was rescued from the swollen Santiam River on Thursday after her encampment along the river banks was flooded.

In Washington state, advisories were issued for at least a half-dozen rivers in the western part of the state.

Landslides were reported on the coast, in southwest Oregon near the town of Elkton and along the Columbia River Highway east of Portland.

Cannon Beach will pay legal fees for public works director in ethics case

By KATIE
FRANKOWICZ
The Astorian

CANNON BEACH — Karen La Bonte, the city's public works director, racked up an estimated \$14,000 in legal expenses this year while dealing with an ethics probe by the state, City Manager Bruce St. Denis said.

On Tuesday, he asked the City Council to cover half.

It was a step back from a resolution St. Denis proposed last week that asked the city to pay for up to \$15,000 of La Bonte's legal fees. His suggestion faced almost immediate pushback from some in the community. St. Denis later removed the item from the council's meeting agenda.

Since then, the city's insurance carrier has determined it will cover up to \$7,500. On Tuesday, city councilors voted 4-1 in favor of an updated proposal from St. Denis to pay up to an additional \$8,000.

In October, the Oregon Government Ethics Commission determined La Bonte violated state conflict of interest laws when the city used a company she co-owns with

her husband to produce pandemic-related signs and other products.

La Bonte had verbally disclosed her ties with Cannon Beach Design Co., but failed to declare a potential conflict of interest in writing before city transactions with the business, the state found. La Bonte was fined \$1,000.

St. Denis called the ethics violation a technicality. The purpose of the resolution he proposed Tuesday was not just to reimburse La Bonte. It was to offer support for her as well, he said.

St. Denis contends La Bonte has been the victim of harassment by Manzanita resident Rusty Morris, who filed several complaints with the Ethics Commission against La Bonte. Morris has also filed complaints with the Clatsop County Sheriff's Office and circulated an online petition to remove La Bonte from her position.

La Bonte and St. Denis say the complaints are not based in fact and stem from a personal grievance.

"As city manager, I believe the city has an obligation to support public employees in a situation like

what Ms. La Bonte has experienced," St. Denis wrote in a lengthy memo to city councilors. "One in which someone used her position with the city to settle a grudge."

"Failure to do so," he added, "sends a message to current and future employees that in a situation which results in them experiencing significant, undeserved humiliation and personal expenses, they should not expect to be supported by the city and its citizens."

An investigator with the Ethics Commission said it did not appear that La Bonte used her position to benefit herself financially.

But Morris refutes St. Denis's characterization. He says he filed the complaints because of sincere concerns that La Bonte was abusing her position.

He was not alone in opposing St. Denis's request to reimburse La Bonte for her legal expenses. City Councilor Robin Risley voted against the resolution Tuesday night, the only "no" vote.

Insurance is already covering up to its maximum, Risley said. The money the City Council was being asked to

approve would be coming from taxpayers.

"This sets a bad precedent to pay for employee ethical violations over and above what's covered in insurance," Risley argued.

While a number of people wrote in support of La Bonte, others asked the city to reconsider the resolution.

La Bonte violated state ethics laws, noted Hannah Buschert and Erik Ostrander, managers of Sea Breeze Court. For the city to cover her legal fees further erodes public trust, they wrote in a letter to city councilors.

"If La Bonte were to have been found not guilty of these violations then, without a doubt, her legal fees should be covered by the funds in support of protecting employees from false accusations by a former associate," they wrote.

"However, to cover these fees after being found guilty shows that whistleblowing on the city is going to be ignored, as if the city is above the rules," they added, "and if the whistleblowing is found to be truthful, and founded by a third party, that there are no repercussions for the guilty parties within the city."

Water: 'Really no pipe can deal with a landslide'

Continued from Page A1

have sometimes required several days to repair, said Nathan Crater, the city engineer.

The current break occurred in an area that is not easily accessible.

It is not clear what caused the waterline break. The pipe is more than 50 years old, but has proved to be very resilient in the past, Crater said. This style of pipe has a long design life, he said.

The damage may have been caused by movement in the earth following days of heavy rain on the North Coast. "Really no pipe can deal

with a landslide," Crater said.

Repairing the transmission line is the city's top priority, City Manager Brett Estes said.

Squall-like conditions knocked out power to more than 1,000 customers in Astoria late Thursday afternoon, according to Pacific Power.

Heavy rains on Thursday evening through Friday morning led to localized flooding throughout Clatsop County as culverts and pipes got backed up with water and debris.

A culvert failure undermined a section of Hillcrest Loop Road in the Knappa area. The road at the 0.5 mile marker has been closed and is

expected to reopen next week, Brett Brenden, the county's foreman for the Knappa area, said.

In the Elsie area, flooded streams started to undermine the edge of the road on Oregon Highway 103, according to T.J. Hecox, the county's foreman for the Jewell area.

"Any time the landowners and the homeowners can clear their driveways of the leaves and the fall debris before the heavy rains definitely helps us out a lot," Hecox said.

A tree toppled on state Highway 103, but was soon cleared, Mark Buffington, the District 1 manager at the Ore-

gon Department of Transportation, said.

Flooding occurred on U.S. Highway 101 on Beerman Creek Road south of Seaside.

From ODOT's standpoint, "Clatsop County's been pretty quiet," Buffington said.

Schools in Knappa opened two hours late on Friday morning.

The school district said the delay was due to flooding on local roads.

The National Weather Service has issued a flood watch for the North Coast through late Friday.

Erick Bengel contributed to this report.

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