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ATOP THE 11TH STREET STAIRS, A PROPERTY OWNER AT ODDS WITH THE CITY



The 11th Street stairs offer a sweeping view of the city and the Columbia River.

Lydia Ely/The Astorian

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Astorian

Like many people in Astoria, Billie O'Neel wanted a garden that was safe from deer.

When she built a fence to keep the marauding animals out of her property on Jerome Avenue, she ran into issues with the city. The fence was taller than code allowed. Then there was the deck. She wanted flat areas for her husband, who is handicapped, to be able to safely walk.

But O'Neel had built both the fence and the deck over a deteriorating retaining wall in a city right of way without first obtaining the necessary permissions. The city is also investigating other possible code violations.

O'Neel, who bought the property in 2011, knows she overstepped. She built during an opportune window when workers and supplies were available and the weather was good.

"I did not go down to City Hall to ask for permission," she said. "I built what I thought was appropriate ... I may be wrong in what I've done, but I did it in the most correct way possible."

For O'Neel, it partly comes back to how the city has maintained — or, as O'Neel's contends, has not maintained — the public property next door: the 11th Street stairs.

See Stairs, Page A3



Billie O'Neel acknowledges she did work on her property without the necessary city approvals.

Lydia Ely/The Astorian



Pigeon steps are also found on Eighth Street.

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Billie O'Neel | homeowner



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Crabbing vessels can begin to set gear on Nov. 28.

Crab season to open on time

Fishermen could start pulling pots on Dec. 1

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Astorian

Marine toxins, skinny crabs and contentious price negotiations have all had a hand in delaying the start of Oregon's lucrative commercial Dungeness crab season in recent years.

Not this season — at least not yet.

For the first time in

MORE INSIDE

Experts advise eating one crab species to save another • A2

years, commercial Dungeness crab fisheries in Oregon, Washington state and Northern California will begin on the traditional Dec. 1 opener after recent preseason testing showed high meat yield in crabs across the region.

See Crab season, Page A2

KNAPPA

State finds gender bias at fire district

Longtime firefighter intends to sue

By ERICK BENGEL
The Astorian

A former emergency medical services officer with the Knappa Fire District intends to sue over an alleged pattern of gender discrimination she experienced on the job.

The state Bureau of Labor and Industries found substantial evidence in December 2020 that the fire district denied Amy Lenz, a longtime paramedic firefighter, opportunities for career advancement that were extended to her male colleagues.

The case was referred to the bureau's administrative prosecution unit, which

last summer declined to press formal charges.

Lenz has retained Dolan Law Group PC, a Portland-based firm, and plans to pursue a lawsuit against the fire district.

In the Bureau of Labor and Industries' report, the fire district under former Fire Chief Paul Olheiser was described as a department for "good ol' boys."

The bureau's report found that Lenz was not promoted to the rank of lieutenant, which fire district policy says is required experience for someone in her position as EMS officer. She had held this position since 2005.

Promotions, however, were given to males who held officer positions.

See Knappa Fire, Page A2

Injured player ramps up the decibels

Colombo cheers team from the bench

By PATRICK WEBB
Chinook Observer

NASELLE, Wash. — When Bella Colombo suffered a season-ending injury, it didn't stop her contributing to her team's state championship bid.

She showed up on the bench on crutches — and cheered her Comet volleyball teammates with gusto.

Naselle left the Washington Interscholastic Activities Association

EVERYDAY
people

ciation state 1B tournament in Yakima, Washington, with a fifth-place trophy.

And Colombo played her part. The junior had injured her ACL in a tournament against Pe Ell late in the season.

But that didn't stop her. As Naselle's younger kids lined the school corridor for the traditional "On to state!" clapping send-off, Colombo — on crutches — almost raced to the van.

Team introductions before

the first game at the SunDome included player No. 6, who waved to the crowd just like her teammates.

And as Morgan Reitz made the first serve in the first game against Pomeroy, it was as if Colombo was on the court with her.

Every time captain Peyton Dalton leaped up two-handed to set the ball — as she had all season — Colombo was there.

Every time strong net player Kaylin Shrives leaped for a spike — as she had all season — Colombo was there.

And every time libero Brynn Tarabochia stooped for a dig in the back court — as she had all season — Colombo was there.

See Colombo, Page A3



Patrick Webb/Chinook Observer

Naselle's Bella Colombo, right, attended the Washington Interscholastic Activities Association state 1B volleyball tournament in Yakima on crutches. But that didn't stop the junior from playing a key role in the Comets' success. She is pictured with team managers Anii Laine, left, and Mylinh Schell.



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