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Astorian

149TH YEAR, NO. 65

WEEKEND EDITION // SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 2021

\$1.50



Lydia Ely/The Astorian

A Pacifick Distillers bottle sits on a table at the distillery in Astoria.

Fishhawk Fisheries owner works to open distillery along riverfront

New plans for a historic building

By ETHAN MYERS
The Astorian

Steve Fick, the owner of Fishhawk Fisheries, has been involved in the seafood industry for about four decades.

But as a self-proclaimed man of many interests, he is always looking to expand his business ventures. This winter, Fick hopes to bring a new distillery to Astoria.

Pacifick Distillers will be located on the riverfront, next door to Fishhawk Fisheries between 3rd and 4th streets, in a vacant building owned by Fick. He will distill vodka, gin and whiskey. Down the road, he hopes to add moonshine to the mix.

He plans to distribute the spirits in Oregon, but eventually work into other states like Alaska, where Fishhawk Fisheries has another location.

"I never had a particular passion for it. Some guys love distilling or love brewing. Mine is more about developing a business, but I've really enjoyed learning a lot about it and we have some really good products," Fick said.

The distillery will have a bar with tasting room privileges and serve a variety of seafood-based meals.

The location for the distillery, known as the Astoria Wharf and Warehouse Co. building, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It



The distillery will include a bar and tasting room and plans to serve a variety of seafood-based meals.

was constructed in the late 1800s and has been used for a number of purposes over the years, but often just for storage, Fick said.

Fick had contemplated how to utilize the unique space. He considered a number of possibilities, including a hotel, but none of them felt right.

"I've seen things go sideways on people," he said. "I want to just have a humble, successful small business that identifies with Astoria, too."

Former City Manager Paul Benoit, who always had appreciation for the building, invited Fick down to check out a distillery in Alameda, California, where Benoit was deputy city manager

at the time, Fick said. Benoit thought he could capitalize on the waterfront location and start a distillery of his own.

In addition to being an intriguing business opportunity, Fick thought it would be a good chance to keep his workers busy around the year.

"If we have a slow period in seafood, like if crab season is over and we don't have something going on, well, maybe that's the time we'll do more bottling," he said. "I am trying to diversify the overall company so that I can give some more stability to my crew."

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'WE WANT TO IDENTIFY THE PAST, THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE ASPECTS OF WHAT ASTORIA IS ABOUT, PARTICULARLY IN THE SEAFOOD INDUSTRY. ... WE HOPE TO GET A FEW PEOPLE WALKING THROUGH THERE, ENJOYING THE SEAFOOD, AND UNDERSTANDING THE DISTILLING PROCESS AND OUR COMMUNITY AND WHAT WE'RE ABOUT.'

Steve Fick | owner of Fishhawk Fisheries

Trooper's killer denied parole

Board raised concerns about sobriety

By ERICK BENGEL
The Astorian

The killer of Oregon State Police Sgt. James D. Shepherd will spend at least four more years in prison.

Last week, Michael Edward Sture, who gunned down the state trooper in Knappa in 1980, said he was fit for parole. His projected release date was in May.

The state Board of Parole and Post-Prison Supervision interviewed Sture to determine if he could safely be released 42 years after he murdered Shepherd.

The board decided Sture, who has chronically abused drugs during his time in prison, needed more years of sobriety to prove he wouldn't relapse and commit more crimes.

The board postponed Sture's parole date to May 2026, with another review slated for November 2025.

"I think that's an excellent decision," said Virginia Shepherd, James Shepherd's widow. "But I hate going through this every few years. It's awful hard on my family."

Clatsop County District Attorney Ron Brown said his office is "quite pleased." At the parole hearing, Brown had pushed for Sture to remain in prison at least another two years.

On May 22, 1980, Sture used two guns to kill Shepherd, who was off duty and

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Hammond fisherman gets new trial in sex abuse case

Judge determines attorney was ineffective

By ERICK BENGEL
The Astorian

A Hammond fisherman sentenced in 2019 to more than 13 years in prison for sex crimes will get a new trial.

A judge in Marion County, where Dennis Lee Sturgell Sr., 69, was imprisoned at the Oregon State Correctional Institution in Salem, determined he received ineffective counsel from his original attorney.

Sturgell was sentenced in January 2019 for various counts involving first-degree sodomy, first-degree unlawful sexual penetration, second-degree sex abuse, bribing a witness and witness tampering.

In September, Judge Claudia Burton vacated the verdicts. The case has been sent back to Clatsop County Circuit Court, and Sturgell is back in the county jail.

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Riverfront hotel project moves forward

Planning Commission approves variances

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Astorian

A new riverfront hotel project in Uniontown landed two key approvals on Tuesday night.

The Astoria Planning Commission unanimously approved two

variances to road setback requirements and window design standards. The variances, City Planner Alex Murphy said, unlock the doors for the project to continue.

Ganesh Sonpatki, the owner of Param Hotel Corp., which operates the Astoria Riverwalk Inn at the West Mooring Basin, hopes to develop a 39-room hotel at the former NW Natural property next to the Astoria Bridge.

The project makes use of the former Paragon Packing building designed by famed Astoria architects John E. Wicks and his daughter, Ebba Wicks Brown.

The proposed hotel, designed by Astoria architect Stuart Emmons, seeks to preserve the building and create a new three-story addition at the back.

But Tuesday's hearings put some of the city's newest development rules to the test.

In 2019, the city approved codes for the Bridge Vista overlay zone that placed height and other restrictions on new construction in a stretch of riverfront near the Astoria Bridge. The codes were an effort to preserve river views and public access to the river.



Lydia Ely/The Astorian

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A three-story, 39-room hotel is planned near Uniontown.



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