

## IN BRIEF

## State reports new virus cases for county

The Oregon Health Authority has reported new coronavirus cases in Clatsop County over the past several days.

The health authority reported four new virus cases on Tuesday, 18 new cases over the weekend and seven new cases on Friday. Since the pandemic began, the county had recorded 2,658 virus cases as of Tuesday.

## Astoria city manager sees pay raise

After acknowledging Astoria City Manager Brett Estes' hard work throughout the coronavirus pandemic, the City Council voted Monday to give him a raise.

The 4% cost of living adjustment boosts Estes' annual salary from \$145,426 to just over \$151,000.

Unlike other city employees, Estes did not receive a cost of living adjustment last year. He had told the City Council he would not accept a pay raise as the city faced ongoing uncertainty and difficulties because of the pandemic.

Mayor Bruce Jones expressed his appreciation for Estes at the meeting on Monday, saying the city manager is "doing a superb job."

"We feel in every way that you're committed to this community, committed to this city," Jones said.

## Port executive director gets pay raise

The Port of Astoria Commission voted Tuesday to give Will Isom, the Port's executive director, a pay raise. His new base salary will be \$168,375.

In an evaluation, Isom received praise for his performance since taking over in 2019, particularly for stabilizing the agency's financial situation in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic.

— *The Astorian*

## Appeals court upholds reversal of halibut charter case

The Washington Appeals Courts Division II has denied a request from the Pacific County Prosecutor's Office to reinstate the 2019 convictions of charter boat skippers David and Robert Gudgell.

In March 2020, Pacific County Superior Court threw out the convictions, which were reached in South Pacific District Court.

The two were convicted of high-grading while conducting halibut charters on the Westwind and Katie Marie during a 2017 season by allegedly fishing over the limit and tossing dead smaller fish overboard before returning to port.

The court sent David Gudgell's conviction for unlawful recreational fishing back for a new trial.

It will be up to the new Pacific County prosecutor whether to continue pursuing the case with a new trial for David Gudgell, or a possible appeal to the state's top-tier Supreme Court.

— *Chinook Observer*

## DEATHS

## Dec. 7, 2021

RIFFE, Valorie Jean Johnson, 65, of Knappa, died in Knappa. Caldwell's Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

## Dec. 6, 2021

KELLEY, Richard Marshall, 74, of Astoria, died in Astoria. Caldwell's

Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

## July 29, 2021

SWEHLA, Robert Mitchell, 35, of Spokane, Washington, formerly of Astoria, died in Spokane. Spokane Cremation & Funeral Service was in charge of the arrangements.

## MEMORIAL

## Saturday, Dec. 11

BRITTON, Linda Ellen (Yunker) — Celebration of life at 11 a.m., Lighthouse Christian Church, 88786 Dellmoor Loop in Warrenton.

## ON THE RECORD

## Robbery

• Benjamin Michael Natividad, 31, of Hammond, was indicted last week for robbery in the third degree, resisting arrest, criminal mischief in the second degree and theft in the third degree. The crimes are alleged to have occurred in late November.

## PUBLIC MEETINGS

## THURSDAY

Sunset Empire Transportation District Board, 9 a.m., (electronic meeting).

Clatsop County Recreational Lands Planning Advisory Committee, 1 p.m., (electronic meeting).

Seaside Civic and Convention Center Commission, 5 p.m., 415 First Ave.

Gearhart Planning Commission, 6 p.m., (electronic meeting).

Warrenton Planning Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 225 S. Main Ave.

## the Astorian

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EXPLOSION  
ROCKS  
SURFSIDE

Pacific County Fire District No. 10

A massive explosion at 1:30 a.m. on Tuesday morning destroyed a large garage-type building on the 305th and N Place cul-de-sac in Surfside and caused damage to other buildings. There were no reported injuries. The cause of the blast is under investigation.

## Buehler endorses Johnson in the 2022 governor's race

## Bend Republican backs independent

By GARY WARNER  
*Oregon Capital Bureau*

Knut Buehler, the Republican nominee for governor in 2018, endorsed state Sen. Betsy Johnson, who is running an insurgent independent campaign for governor in 2022.

Johnson's campaign released a "dear friends" letter from Buehler to past supporters on Tuesday.

"I am endorsing Betsy Johnson for governor," Buehler writes. "Betsy's plain-spoken, independent spirit and proven record of putting the concerns of everyday Oregonians before partisan politics is exactly what Oregon needs right now."

The letter ends with a link to Johnson's campaign fundraising committee.

Buehler said the closed primaries of the Democratic and Republican parties would put candidates on the ballot who represented the most radical elements of their parties.

"It is vital that we break the iron grip monopoly of the radical left on power, politics and policy in our state," Buehler said of Democrats.

Republicans would likely nominate someone who Buehler believes would have little chance of appealing to most



State Sen. Betsy Johnson is running for governor as an independent.

voters in Oregon, which has not elected a Republican as governor since 1982.

"Unfortunately, the Republican Party is no longer a viable alternative in Oregon," Buehler said.

Johnson's announcement that she would run as an independent after 21 years in the Legislature as a Democrat was met with disapproval by Democratic leaders.

Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, stripped her of her co-chairmanship of the powerful Joint Ways and Means Committee, the state's main budget-writing panel. Johnson remains a registered Democrat and retains her seat in the Senate.

Johnson has consistently been the most moderate of Democrats in the Senate. While backing most of her party's social issue stances, including support for abor-

tion rights, she has voted with Republicans on issues such as business restrictions, gun rights and limiting carbon emissions.

The Democratic and Republican nominees will be selected in the May primary. Johnson has to submit just over 24,000 valid signatures backing her candidacy to the secretary of state over the early summer to go directly on the November general election.

Tuesday's endorsement is a return to Buehler's oldest political stance, when he worked as the chief Oregon organizer for independent Ross Perot's 1992 campaign for president.

Buehler ran as a Republican for secretary of state in 2012, losing the general election to the incumbent, Democrat Kate Brown. Brown became governor in early

2015 following the resignation of Gov. John Kitzhaber in an influence-peddling scandal.

Buehler was elected to the House as a Republican in 2014, representing Bend. He was reelected in 2016, the same year Brown won a special election against Republican Bud Pierce to serve the rest of Kitzhaber's term. Pierce has filed to run for governor as a Republican in 2022.

Buehler, a moderate Republican who had been critical of President Donald Trump and did not support his successful 2016 bid for the White House, won the 2018 Republican primary for governor with 46.2% of the vote but lost to Brown.

Buehler entered the Republican primary for the 2nd Congressional District seat in 2020, which was open following the retirement of U.S. Rep. Greg Walden. Buehler tried to reverse his reputation as a critic of Trump, supporting the then-president's policies and reelection bid for the White House. Buehler finished second in a crowded field to Cliff Bentz, a Republican state senator from Ontario, who went on to win the heavily Republican district in the November election.

*The Oregon Capital Bureau is a collaboration between EO Media Group and Pamplin Media Group.*

## Stairs: 'I'll be making a very difficult decision soon'

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city staff.

O'Neel described herself as a "battered homeowner" who had been abused by city planning staff over the years. "I'm so impressed with our city staff," Herman countered. "They're hardworking. They're dedicated. They take a lot of abuse."

"Because they are working for a public agency they are not at liberty to respond to verbal abuse," she added, "so I will, as a council member: They don't deserve that. It's not professional, it's not civil and it's not community-minded, no matter how difficult of a position you feel yourself in."

To City Councilor Tom Hilton, there was another layer: O'Neel built on property that belongs to the residents of Astoria and functions as a type of public park.

In the city's report, staff noted that O'Neel had encroached on an iconic vista. The improvements she made would require multiple variances that are not supported by the city's development code. City water and sewer pipes run through the right of way and encroachments could make it difficult to access these utilities. O'Neel also covered up a failed portion of a retaining wall, which could hide further deterioration, staff wrote.

"I just think if you would have followed the process and done what the code and what the city was asking you to do, I believe we wouldn't be in the predicament we're in right now," Hilton said.

O'Neel has helped maintain the area of the 11th Street stairs that is near her property and has an agreement in place with the city's Parks and Recreation Department to restore decorative colonnades at the top of the stairs at her own expense. She plans to employ a contractor

who is working on her house.

Now, O'Neel told the City Council, "I'll be making a very difficult decision soon."

She isn't sure she will still want to donate the work if the city is going to force her to tear down the fence, decking and arbor.

O'Neel admits she did the work without getting the necessary permission from the city, but she contends that she has only enhanced the area — her own property and the city parkland — with her improvements.

## GAME MEAT PROCESSING



Debbie D's will be at Cash & Carry in Warrenton at 10:00 a.m. every Saturday to pick up and deliver meat for processing.

20 lb. min • Each batch individual

Please call Mon-Fri between 10-4 so we know to expect you.

DEBBIE D'S Jerky & Sausage Factory  
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## WANTED

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