

IN BRIEF

County extends moratorium on vacation rental permits

Permits for new vacation rentals will not be processed and issued in Clatsop County's unincorporated areas and Gearhart's urban growth boundary through at least April 28.

The county Board of Commissioners on Wednesday approved a 120-day extension of a moratorium on new licenses for short-term rentals. The move gives the county additional time to examine the regulations that govern these businesses.

Short-term rentals have become a contentious matter — lucrative for property owners and good for local tourism, but complaints have mounted about trash, noise, parking problems and other nuisances, as well as unclear recourse for affected neighbors.

The original moratorium went into effect on Sept. 1 and was set to expire on Dec. 29. The county, which had planned at least a six-month process to review the short-term rental rules, had assumed an extension would be necessary, Community Development Director Gail Henrikson said.

The county has held two town hall meetings — one in September, the other in November — to get feedback on the core issues.

A third town hall meeting, scheduled for Jan. 22, will look at zoning, good-neighbor standards, neighborhood notifications and rules for on-the-ground property agents.

Proposed revisions to the short-term rental ordinance will come before the board at a January work session. The final revisions will be discussed at two public hearings slated for February, Henrikson said.

State discloses virus cases at local schools

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

All three cases were students, according to the health authority's weekly outbreak report. One case was from Astor Elementary School, while the other two were from Seaside High School.

The health authority, meanwhile, disclosed eight new virus cases for the county on Thursday and 10 new cases on Wednesday. Since the start of the pandemic, the county had recorded 2,677 virus cases as of Thursday.

— The Astorian

MEMORIAL

Thursday, Dec. 16

VAN DUSEN, Carol Susan — Open house celebration of life from 1:30 to 4 p.m., Astoria Golf & Country Club, 33445 Sunset Beach Lane in Warrenton. Caldwell's Luce-Layton Mortuary was in charge of the arrangements.

ON THE RECORD

Assault

• Raymond Scott Behnoud, 49, of Astoria, was arrested on Tuesday on W. Kensington Avenue in Astoria for assault in the fourth degree constituting domestic violence, harassment, three counts of resisting arrest and menacing. Behnoud also had a warrant for his arrest for a previous charge of improper use of 911.

Theft

• Jacob Eye Terrill, 35, of Gearhart, was indicted in November for theft in

the first degree, unlawful entry into a motor vehicle, theft in the second degree and criminal mischief in the third degree. The crimes are alleged to have occurred early in the month.

DUI

• Heather Marie Dickins, 29, of Pensacola, Florida, was arrested on Wednesday at Marine Drive and 29th Street in Astoria for driving under the influence of intoxicants, hit-and-run involving property and reckless driving.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

MONDAY

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

Seaside City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

TUESDAY

Clatsop County Planning Commission, 10 a.m., (electronic meeting).

Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District Board, 4 p.m., workshop, Bob Chisholm Community Center, 1225 Avenue A, Seaside.

Cannon Beach City Council, 6 p.m., work session, (electronic meeting).

Lewis & Clark Fire Department Board, 6 p.m., main fire station, 34571 U.S. Highway 101 Business.

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

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

Clatsop Community College Board, 6:30 p.m., (electronic meeting).

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FOOD PARADE

Lydia Ely/The Astorian

Volunteers pass through rows of donations while boarding the streetcar during the Astoria Fire Department's Holiday Food Parade on Tuesday.

Johnson pitches centrist message to farmers

State senator appeared at annual convention

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

REDMOND — If she's elected Oregon's governor next year, state Sen. Betsy Johnson expects to keep her veto pen busy.

Many of the state Democratic Party's policies go against the interests of ordinary Oregonians and thus wouldn't pass muster with her administration, she said at the Oregon Farm Bureau's annual convention in Redmond.

"The 'D' behind my name doesn't define me," said Johnson, D-Scappoose, noting that she refuses to "march lockstep" with Democratic priorities that harm agriculture.

"Why do some legislators appear to be so anti-farmer? I find this inexplicable," she said.

Johnson's observations were repeatedly interrupted by applause and laughter from the crowd of farmers, whom she plans to court vigorously in her independent campaign for governor. She intends to leave the Democratic Party and run as a nonaffiliated candidate.

"Oregonians can be surprisingly independent and that's independent with a small 'i,'" she said. "Our government needs a centrist to bring the opposing sides together."

Johnson said she's focused on fundraising but will begin flying around rural parts of the state next year, since she realizes "there's an Oregon that's east of Bend and south of Eugene."

Reaching out to residents outside the state's major population centers will be key to her campaign strategy, Johnson later told Capital Press.

"The support of rural Oregon will be absolutely essential to win this race," she said.

Johnson reminded farmers of several instances in which she defied the Democratic supermajority in the Legislature, such as voting against controversial cap-and-trade bills that aimed to curtail carbon emissions.

"Being told climate change is the most important issue our nation faces rings hollow when you're struggling to make it to the end of the month," she said.



Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press

State Sen. Betsy Johnson speaks with Bob Klinger, a Polk County sheep farmer, at the Oregon Farm Bureau's annual convention in Redmond on Wednesday.

'THE SUPPORT OF RURAL OREGON WILL BE ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL TO WIN THIS RACE.'

State Sen. Betsy Johnson

Another bill to mandate higher overtime wages for farm workers was based on "emotions, not reality," since it would likely result in reduced hours and paychecks for those employees, she said.

Johnson highlighted her support for legislation that's helped farmers, including a bill that reduced regulatory requirements for cleaning drainage ditches.

"There are legislators in Salem who have no idea how important clean ditches are," she said.

State environmental policy had treated all such ditches as "pristine salmonid habitat," Johnson said. "No, they're not. They're a ditch."

Farmers must give lawmakers an earful about policies that are important to them, which may mean testifying online during the next legislative session, she said.

"Don't give up, even if leadership locks down the building," Johnson said. "Don't let them screw you with the door closed."

Closing the Capitol to the public is an example

of the state's "episodic and jerky" coronavirus restrictions, which didn't "necessarily follow the science," she said.

"Nobody in Salem will crown me Miss Congeniality, but that's fine," Johnson said. "There are enough smiling faces in Salem."

Many farmers will likely be receptive to Johnson's message, even though the agriculture industry traditionally leans Republican, according to several growers at the conference.

"I'm not happy with the Republicans or the Democrats. They can't work with each other and are entrenched in their own little world," said Peter Kenagy, a Benton County farmer. "Neither of them sees the bigger picture of where we're headed as a state."

Farmers recognize Johnson as a Democrat who has "really stood up" for the industry, he said. "They value her historical support

for agriculture," he said.

Johnson is seen as an exception to the Democratic Party's restrictive approach to commercial-scale agriculture, said Mike McCarthy, an orchardist in Hood River County.

"She would reduce the overregulatory environment that's putting us out of business," he said.

Bob Klinger, a Polk County sheep farmer, said he doesn't think farmers are married to voting for a Republican candidate in the 2022 election.

"I'm registered as a Republican but I'm an independent. It's just if I don't register as a Republican, I don't get much of a voice," he said. "When she says she's independent, that's what makes her acceptable to me."

While Johnson has always been good to work with, the "bottom line" is whether she'll be able to keep a left-leaning candidate from winning, said Kathy Hadley, a Polk County farmer.

"I want to see some polling and a path to victory," she said. "That is the key underlying principle: Who can beat the progressive?"

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