

## IN BRIEF

## State reports more than three dozen virus cases for Clatsop County

The Oregon Health Authority reported 17 new coronavirus cases for Clatsop County on Thursday and 25 new virus cases on Wednesday.

Since the pandemic began, the county had recorded 2,742 virus cases as of Thursday.

The health authority, meanwhile, also disclosed 10 virus cases at local schools.

All of the virus cases involved students, according to the health authority's weekly outbreak report. The majority of the cases were from the Knappa School District, with seven from Hilda Lahti Elementary School and one from Knappa High School.

Knappa Superintendent Bill Fritz said the virus cases were tied to events outside of school and there is no concern of person-to-person spread on school property.

Of the final two cases, one was from Jewell School and one was from Astoria Middle School.

— *The Astorian*

## Busch to seek Senate appointment

Warren Democrat Melissa Busch, who is running for state Senate next year, will seek to enter office ahead of schedule.

Busch announced Wednesday that she wants to be considered for appointment to the Senate District 16 seat vacated by Betsy Johnson. Johnson stepped down to focus on her campaign for governor as an independent.

Busch, a home health nurse, announced her candidacy for Senate in November.

"As our next state senator, I will lead with care and compassion, and I will stand up for our community, just like I stand up for my patients," Busch said in a statement Wednesday declaring her interest in the appointment.

— *Oregon Capital Bureau*

## Tillamook dentist to run for House

Cyrus Javadi, a Tillamook dentist, announced this week he is running in the Republican primary for state House District 32.

Rep. Suzanne Weber, R-Tillamook, who represents the district, is running for state Senate District 16.

Betsy Johnson resigned from the Senate to focus on her campaign for governor as an independent.

House District 32 and Senate District 16 cover the North Coast.

## Elk attacks reported in Cannon Beach

CANNON BEACH — Elk have attacked dogs in two separate incidents this month.

The first, which took place in a city park in late afternoon, resulted in slight injuries to the dog, possibly an injured paw, Police Chief Jason Schermerhorn said.

In the second, an elk attacked a woman and her dog in Les Shirley Park at night. The woman, a part-time resident, refused medical treatment, but Schermerhorn said he learned the dog's injuries were more extensive than in the first incident.

The chief said that elk reports usually involve crashes on the highway. He spoke with Sgt. Joe Warwick, of Oregon State Police's fish and wildlife division.

"(Warwick) said that every time that he's heard of a so-called elk attack, it's involving a dog," Schermerhorn said, "and it's because the elk see them as wolves and they're just protecting themselves and their herd."

— *The Astorian*

## ON THE RECORD

## Strangulation

• Charles David Miller, 26, of Astoria, was indicted this week for two counts of strangulation, menacing constituting domestic violence and interference with making a report. The crimes are alleged to have occurred earlier this month.

## Burglary

• Jason Brian Pace, 38, of Warrenton, was indicted in August for

burglary in the second degree, theft in the first degree and unlawful entry into a motor vehicle. The crimes are alleged to have occurred in June 2020.

## DUI

• William Zygmunt Boluk, 60, of Hammond, was arrested on Wednesday near the Warrenton entrance of the New Youngs Bay Bridge for driving under the influence of intoxicants and reckless driving.

## PUBLIC MEETINGS

## MONDAY

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

## TUESDAY

**Cannon Beach Planning Commission**, 6 p.m., (electronic meeting).

**Seaside Planning Commission**, 6 p.m., work session, City Hall, 989 Broadway.

## the Astorian

Established July 1, 1873  
(USPS 035-000)

Published Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday by EO Media Group, 949 Exchange St., PO Box 210, Astoria, OR 97103 Telephone 503-325-3211, 800-781-3211 or Fax 503-325-6573. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Astorian, PO Box 210, Astoria, OR 97103-0210

DailyAstorian.com

MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS  
MEMBER CERTIFIED AUDIT OF CIRCULATIONS, INC.

Circulation phone number:  
800-781-3214

Periodicals postage paid at Astoria, OR

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Printed on recycled paper

Subscription rates  
Effective January 12, 2021

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## A strong catch



Luke Whittaker/Chinook Observer

Local processors and retailers said the quantity and quality of crab have been excellent so far this commercial season. Pictured is a crab delivered by Dean Ellsworth of the F/V Nola K.

## Parks: Fire district not renewing service contract

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confident we'll find a way to do that," Havel said, adding that the ongoing conversations will not compromise visitor safety.

The fire district received about 30 calls to state parks and recreation areas in 2021.

Multiple agencies usually respond to rescues at state parks, which can involve a hiker falling off a

cliff, someone being pulled into the ocean or a medical emergency.

And the rescues happen year round, Reckmann said, pointing to a rope rescue at Hug Point and a trail rescue at Indian Beach in Ecola State Park over the past two months.

Both took several hours, which is typical, he said, adding that the fire district only has rope rescue and

trail rescue teams to respond to incidents at parks.

By choosing to not renew the service contract with the state, the chief said the fire district is left with two options: stop responding or bill the state for each response.

Although he cannot guarantee the state will pay the bills, Reckmann said the fire district will continue responding to calls at

state parks and recreation sites outside of the district, which include Ecola State Park and Oswald West State Park. The fire district also assists in rescues at Saddle Mountain.

Arcadia Beach State Recreation Site, Tolovana and Hug Point fall inside the fire district, so the district would not be able to bill for responses at those sites.

## Police: Homelessness a big challenge, Spalding says

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supported and the department is left in good hands.

## No. 1 challenge

Spalding had retired as chief of the Beaverton Police Department when he replaced former police chief and assistant city manager Brad Johnston in Astoria. Prior to his more than seven years in Beaverton, he retired from a 31-year career at the Fullerton Police Department in California.

He also served as president of the Oregon Association Chiefs of Police.

During his time in Astoria, Spalding helped guide the city's homelessness solutions task force. He also urged the City Council to take steps to address chronic bad behavior downtown and other public places by a small number of people who account for a disproportionate share of 911 calls.

He said addressing homelessness has been his No. 1 challenge, an issue where he and his officers are often pulled in the middle.

"It's just been significantly challenging," the chief said. "And there just aren't a lot of great solutions, at least that I've been able to discover."

"And it seems like every year we're dealt with a new challenge from the Legislature in terms of having tools to be able to address some of these problems that we're experiencing."

"But with that being said, we also have some really great partners we work with," he said. "We're also very much resource-strapped. So none of us really have all the tools we'd really like to be able to be as effective as we could be."

Staffing the police department's dispatch center also remains a challenge, and forced the department to temporarily move dispatchers to the Seaside Police Department in October.

"We have three dispatchers in training. We have our new communication manager. So there's definitely light at the end of the tunnel," he said. "It's just been

*'I'VE BEEN VERY FORTUNATE TO WORK FOR A SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY, A SUPPORTIVE CITY COUNCIL AND A SUPPORTIVE CITY MANAGER AND DEPARTMENT HEAD TEAM. THAT'S PROBABLY A SIGNIFICANT REASON THAT I'VE STAYED AS LONG AS I HAVE.'*

— Geoff Spalding, Astoria police chief

a long haul. I immensely appreciate the dispatchers both in Astoria and Seaside that have stuck with us through these challenges."

In the weeks after George Floyd's murder by Minneapolis police in 2020, when Black Lives Matter protests were taking place across the country and there were calls to defund the police by some organizations, the chief agreed some types of crisis response calls could be better handled by social services agencies with specialized training in mental health and substance abuse-related calls instead of police. But he felt shifting money from police to social services would put a bigger strain on smaller towns like Astoria already operating with limited resources.

"There's been national conversation on defunding the police and we hear it all the time," he said. "We see how this is impacting other departments, even as close as the Portland metropolitan area. They are not well supported by their communities and it makes their job even more difficult."

Spalding said having a supportive community in Astoria has made a huge difference.

"Being a police chief is a difficult job because things can happen, things go wrong, and oftentimes the chief is the person that's the fall guy, and he or she will accept responsibility for things that are sometimes even out of his or her control," he said.

With the average work life span of a chief being three to five years, Spalding

sees his four years in Astoria as an accomplishment.

"I've been very fortunate to work for a supportive community, a supportive City Council and a supportive city manager and department head team," he said. "That's probably a significant reason that I've stayed as long as I have."

"I've been very fortunate to work in that environment, and again, to work with a good organization with a lot of good people."

## 'Steady influence'

Deputy Chief Eric Halverson said he feels fortunate to have had Spalding's mentorship.

"Four decades in this business is an elite club that very few people who don the uniform ever achieve," he said. "If anyone deserves to enjoy retirement, it is a man who has put so many years of service into the policing profession. In fact, I think it was his heart of service that brought him to our department in a time of need and change."

"This will be a transition for us, but this is also a business of transition and he expects of us that we move forward, we learn and we always strive to do better. I

think we have an excellent police department and some of the most dedicated communications operators any community could hope for. The chief is leaving us in a good place with good people to carry on a philosophy of service."

Halverson has no plans to pursue the role as chief, and believes his position as deputy chief is the best way for him to continue to serve the city and department.

"Rest assured that I want the best for our city, too, and my personal belief about the best way for us to grow, is through new perspectives, different experience and new ideas," he said. "Of course, I'll be here to help with the mechanics and the history."

City leaders praised Spalding's guidance.

"Astoria has been extremely lucky to have such an experienced, talented professional as Chief Spalding at the helm of our police department this last 4 1/2 years," Mayor Bruce Jones said in an email. "His calm steady influence dealing with a number of key issues was of great benefit to the community."

"As mayor, I appreciated his leadership and wise counsel. I will miss him and wish him well in retirement."

City Manager Brett Estes said Spalding will be missed. He said the city has hired an executive recruiter to search for a new police chief.

"We have a great team at the Astoria Police Department and Astoria Dispatch and I appreciate him staying through the hiring process to allow a smooth transition to a new chief of police," he said.

## VOLUNTEER PICK OF THE WEEK



## Roo

5 year old male  
mystery mix  
(possibly Andalusian)

Attentive and wise, Roo is full of love and joy -- a handy sized fantasy character come to life.

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