



INSIDE

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Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Seaside is trying to create greater equality between softball and baseball.

## Softball field upgrades are driven by federal agreement

### First phase toward achieving equality

By KATHERINE LACAZE  
For The Astorian

SEASIDE — The Seaside School District launched the first phase of a project to upgrade softball facilities in response to an agreement with the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights.

The school district has until the end of June 2023 to build the facility and provide greater equality between girls and boys athletics.

It's been an ongoing issue since before she arrived in the school district, Susan Penrod, the school superintendent, said. "We're excited to complete this project, with, of course, our top priority being to provide a wonderful softball complex for our athletes, in addition to meeting our deadlines with the Office of Civil Rights," she said.

The first phase, which was approved during the December school board meeting, involves working with Brian Hardebeck, a senior project manager at DAY CPM, to coordinate and complete the project. Hardebeck was part of the team that worked on construction of the new school campus, so the school district is extending his contract for the softball complex, Penrod said. ZCS



R.J. Marx/The Astorian

A hole is underneath third base on the softball field at Broadway Field.

Engineering & Architecture will assist with the design.

The engineering team is reviewing a number of potential locations for the upgraded facility and trying to determine which one will best meet the requirements of the agreement, which is meant to remedy disparities between the practice and playing fields of the female athletes compared to their male counterparts.

The noticeable differences between

the baseball and softball diamonds at Broadway Field create potential violations of Title IX, the federal law meant to protect against discrimination in education.

In 2012, Seaside parents Randy Anderson and John Nicolazzi filed a lawsuit in federal court alleging the school district failed to permit girls from participating equally with boys.

See Field, Page A6

## Booster shots lag as new virus cases spike

Rate is highest among people 65 and over

By ERICK BENGEL  
The Astorian

As the omicron variant of COVID-19 leads to a rapid rise in virus cases, the number of Clatsop County residents who have received a booster dose against the virus continues to lag far behind those who have completed their initial vaccination series.

The county said nearly 11,000 residents have received a booster dose. The booster rate is highest — 58% — among people 65 and older, according to Oregon Health Authority figures. In that population, 85.8% have completed their initial vaccinations.

The booster rate declines with each younger age group.

People 50 to 64 years old have a 37% booster rate, compared to 76.5% that completed their initial series.

People 20 to 49 have a 19.3% booster rate, compared to 65.4% that completed their initial series.

And boosters among 18- and 19-year-olds stand at 8.5%, compared to 52.7% that completed their initial series.

Margo Lulich, the county's interim

See Booster shots, Page A6

## Child care center closes after virus case

Sprouts Learning Center hopes to reopen next week

By NICOLE BALES  
The Astorian

Sprouts Learning Center, a child care facility run by the city, has temporarily closed after an employee tested positive for the coronavirus.

The employee of the Astoria Parks and Recreation Department works in the aquatics and recreation and child care divisions, officials said on Monday.

As a precautionary measure, Jonah Dart-McLean, the city's parks director, said the learning center will close through Friday while staff deep cleans and sanitizes the area. The facility, which operates out of the Astoria Recreation Center, will reopen on Monday.

See Sprouts, Page A6

## Warrenton planning director stepping away

### Points to inability to find housing

By ETHAN MYERS  
The Astorian

WARRENTON — Scott Hazelton is resigning from his position as the city's planning director later this month.

His last day in his office will be Jan. 21, but he could work remotely for a period of time to oversee the completion of a few projects.

Hazelton, who took on the role in September, pointed to the inability

to find long-term housing as the primary reason for stepping down.

"It's an unfortunate circumstance," he said. "I knew moving out here that housing was a big deal and I tried to give it a hell of a run getting a house for 4 1/2 months and just couldn't get it done."

He said a month-to-month living arrangement became unworkable due to leaky plumbing, and after looking well outside Warrenton, two other situations fell through because of failed inspections. Hazelton is now living in a motel until he leaves.

Hazelton said the challenges of the job were compounded by the lack of housing.

"There is a lot going on. I think it is kind of like drinking from a fire hose and then at the end of the day when you don't go home to a

steady housing situation it makes things seem more overwhelming in the job," he said. "It's a high-volume job, but it's definitely a doable job, and that's not why I'm leaving."

Hazelton, who also cited personal reasons and a lack of a support system as factors in his departure, will relocate to Kansas to be closer to friends and family. He served as the planning director in Powell County, Montana, before coming to Warrenton.

The planning director position has seen plenty of faces in the last year. Scott Hess vacated the role last May, and Will Caplinger, a former planning manager for Clatsop County, had been filling in remotely from Taiwan until Hazelton was hired.

City Manager Linda Engbretson said the city could potentially hold

off on searching for another planning director and work with consultants in the meantime. Engbretson, who plans to retire once her role is filled, has considered letting the new city manager help fill the planning director position.

Hazelton said he will be available to remotely assist a new planning director transition into the role at any time.

Despite his short tenure, Hazelton had high praise for city staff.

"Warrenton is a great place and I have worked in a handful of places and when I worked in the private sector, I worked in a handful of jurisdictions — I think Warrenton has the best city staff I've worked with, by far," he said. "They're a group of people that works super hard and knows their stuff."



Scott Hazelton

"That is probably my biggest regret, that I don't get to continue to work with these people because it's not just that they do their jobs, it's the willingness to learn new things and adopt new software and change things up to make things better. That is one of the main reasons I wanted to move out here."



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