

Officials appoint Johnson's replacement

Armitage does not plan to run for state Senate

By ERICK BENGEL
The Astorian

Rachel Armitage, a Warren resident who chairs the Democratic Party of Oregon's Womxn's Caucus, is the new state senator for Senate District 16.

County commissioners from within the district appointed Armitage on Friday morning from a group of three finalists during a virtual meeting held at the Columbia County Courthouse.

Armitage will finish the term of former state Sen. Betsy Johnson, the prominent and influential Scappoose Democrat who announced her independent gubernatorial run in October and resigned from the Senate in December to focus on her campaign. The term runs through 2022.

The district covers all of Clatsop and Columbia counties and parts of Tillamook, Washington, Multnomah and Yamhill counties.

In an interview, Armitage — who received 87.6% of the weighted vote — said she felt “very excited, deeply honored.” Melissa Busch, another Warren resident and a home health nurse with Providence Health & Services, and Nadia Gardner, an environmental consultant

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County declares emergency over flooding

A response to storms that hit the region last week

By ERICK BENGEL
The Astorian

The Clatsop County Board of Commissioners has declared an emergency over storm-related flooding in the hope of getting resources from the state to help recover.

The amount needed to pay for the damage caused by the wet weather, which occurred from Jan. 3 through Jan. 6, has exceeded \$144,082, the county's threshold for declaring a disaster, according to Tiffany Brown, the county's emergency management director.

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Signs with COVID-19 protocols are posted at Astoria High School.

Lydia Ely/The Astorian

As virus cases soar, Astoria schools committed to in-person learning

School district hosted virtual meeting for parents

By ETHAN MYERS
The Astorian

Astoria Superintendent Craig Hoppes stressed to parents on Thursday night that despite a rise in coronavirus cases among students and staff, the school district is dedicated to maintaining in-person learning.

Hoppes, who was accompanied by Margo Lalich, Clatsop County's interim public health director, and Lisa McClean, the county's immunization coordinator, hosted a virtual meeting for parents due to confusion around shifting virus protocols.

After a short presentation, Hoppes gave parents an opportunity to ask questions. Over 100 parents tuned in at the peak of the discussion. A similar meeting was held for Spanish-speaking families shortly after.

The school district has followed the Oregon Health Authority's guidance from the start of the pandemic, Hoppes said. Many of the restrictions have changed over the last 20 months, including the isolation period being reduced from 10 days to five.

Throughout the meeting, an emphasis was placed on the school district doing what it can to avoid a complete return to remote learning.

“I can tell you that myself, I can tell you — I would guess 99.9% of the staff in the district — as well as the school board, are dedicated to in-person instruction,” Hoppes said. “We’re going to do everything we can to stay in person. We’re taking steps necessary to be able to do that.”

State reports dozens of new virus cases for county

The Astorian

The Oregon Health Authority has reported dozens of new virus cases for Clatsop County over the past few days.

The state reported 40 new virus cases for the county on Friday, 97 new cases Thursday and 45 new cases on Wednesday.

Since the pandemic began, the county had recorded 3,380 virus cases and 37 deaths as of Friday.

“What it comes down to as a district, to be upfront and honest, is we need kids to stay home if they have symptoms and we need staff to stay home if they have symptoms.”

Virus cases surge

New virus cases, linked to the omicron variant, have surged across Oregon. Virus case numbers have jumped in schools in Clatsop County since students returned to classes after the holidays.

On an online dashboard, the Astoria School District has posted 19 positive or presumptive virus cases — 16 students and three staff — and 10 people in quarantine across all schools

within the past week. The school district has recorded 63 virus cases this school year as of early Friday.

Last week, the Jewell School District sent home all kindergarten-through-third grade students due to three positive virus cases.

The Oregon Health Authority, in a weekly outbreak report that documents virus cases through late Sunday, disclosed six new virus cases at schools in the county.

All six cases were students. Two cases were from the Astoria School District, with one from Lewis and Clark Elementary School and one from Astoria High School.

One case was from Warrenton Grade School.

The final three cases were from the Seaside School District, with two from Seaside Middle School and one from Seaside High School.

One of the biggest struggles with the surge in new virus cases, Hoppes said, is having to find fill-ins for staff who have to isolate or quarantine.

A number of schools in Oregon have turned to remote learning, many due to the inability to find enough healthy staff.

“Our school districts in Clatsop County are doing very well relative to many, many districts,” Lalich said. “I’m commending all the staff, the superintendents and all of you who pay attention to the guidance and do the best you can with your kids.”

While the county's school superintendents had expressed confidence this school year that the virus had not spread on school grounds, and exposures had mostly come from home and off-campus events, Hoppes took a different tone on Thursday.

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Appeals court sides with Cannon Beach in beach house dispute



Lydia Ely/The Astorian

A Cannon Beach couple is in a legal fight to build a beach house.

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

CANNON BEACH — The Oregon Court of Appeals has upheld the city's decision to deny a couple a building permit for a beach house.

Stanley and Rebecca Roberts submitted an application to construct a 2,712-square-foot oceanfront home on a steep hillside off of Hemlock Street. The proposal, however, did not advance because it did not meet the city's oceanfront setback standard.

After several appeals with the city, the Roberts appealed to the state Land Use Board of Appeals, which sided with Cannon Beach. Then the Roberts sought judicial review from

the Court of Appeals which, in December, upheld the state's and city's decision.

The location of the Roberts' 5,394-square-foot property puts it under an oceanfront management overlay, which requires the application to comply with the city's oceanfront setback rule. The rule requires that new development be set away from the shore and outlines how to calculate that distance.

If the setback standard was applied, it would significantly reduce the possible footprint for any building on the property.

The couple argued that there is ambiguity in the city's ordinance, which can lead to different interpretations. They also argued that state law prohibits

Cannon Beach from applying the standard because it has the effect of reducing the density of their proposed home by reducing the floor area.

In the ruling, the appeals court rejected the Roberts' first argument, concluding that they “rely on potential ambiguity in various terms when they are considered without reference to their context and the purpose of the ordinance.”

As far as the state rule dealing with housing density, the

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