

the Astorian

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Crab fest to return after virus disruption

In-person event set for late April

By ABBEY McDONALD
The Astorian

The Crab, Seafood & Wine Festival will be held in person this April for the first time in three years.

The popular event, which regularly sees over 10,000 attendees, serves as a fundraiser for the Astoria-Warrenton Area Chamber of Commerce and community groups.

First held in 1982, the festival was canceled in 2020 due to coronavirus pandemic safety measures.

Last year's virtual event featured an online marketplace allowing participants to chat with vendors and watch live music from their screens. It also included Festival Feast passports, encouraging trips to participating businesses and restaurants around town.

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Photos by Lydia Ely/The Astorian

New signs, lighting and a Portland Loo-style outdoor bathroom are planned for the Astoria Riverwalk.

Astoria approves design for Riverwalk wayfinding signs

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

New signs, lighting and a Portland Loo-style outdoor bathroom are in the works for the Uniontown and downtown portions of the Astoria Riverwalk.

The city expects to have new wayfinding signs, interpretive maps, trolley-stop maps and mile markers installed by spring. New lighting and an outdoor bathroom will follow.

The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department awarded the city a \$428,408 grant in 2021 to carry out improvements. The city provided a 40% match from urban renewal and tourism promotion funds to bring the project total to \$717,345.

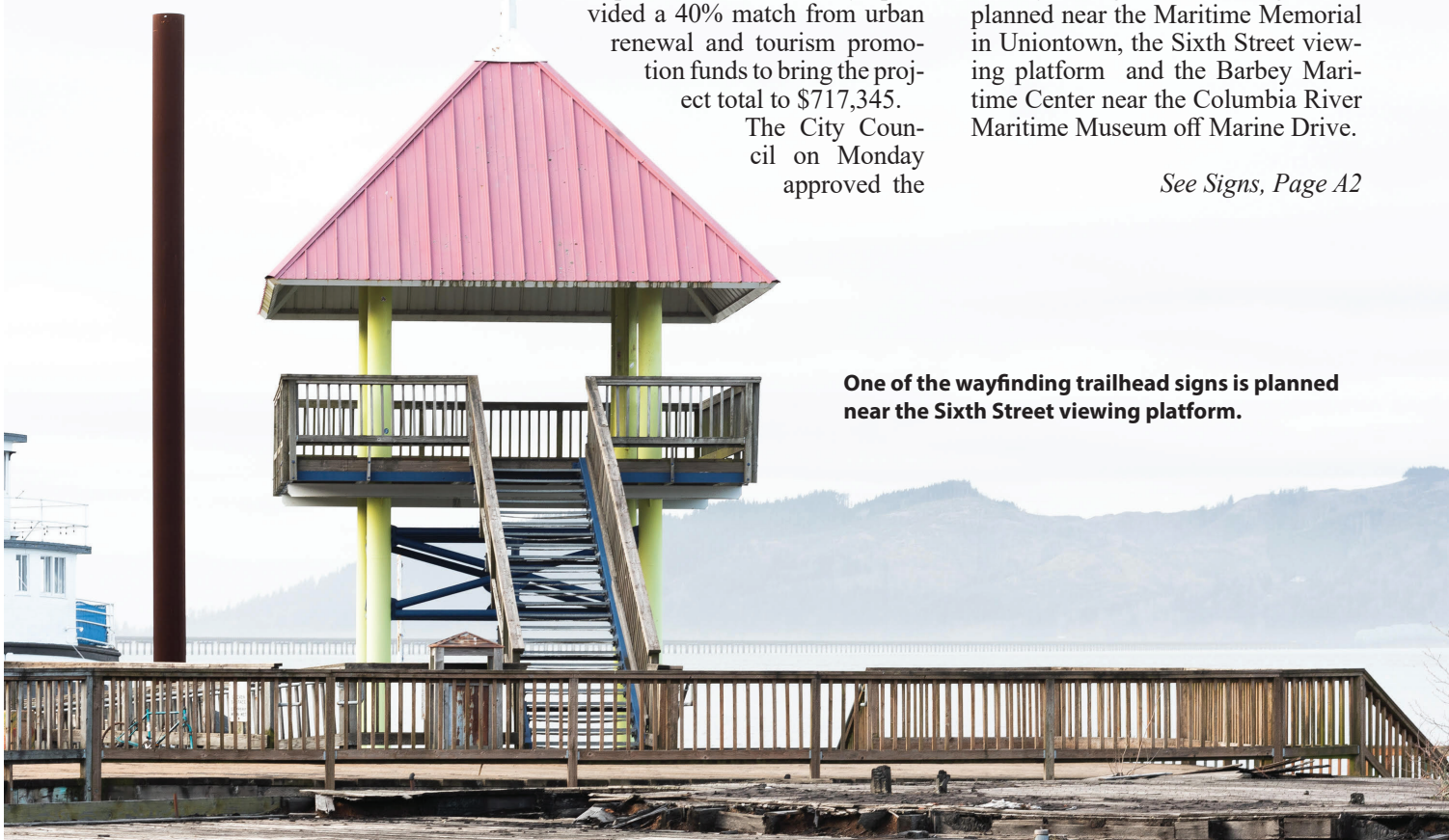
The City Council on Monday approved the

design for the signs.

"I think it's an excellent effort," Mayor Bruce Jones said. "The signs are really good. I'm appreciative of the fact that each of the neighborhoods have something, whether it's a full interpretive wayfinding sign or the trolley stop signs."

Wayfinding trailhead signs are planned near the Maritime Memorial in Uniontown, the Sixth Street viewing platform and the Barbey Maritime Center near the Columbia River Maritime Museum off Marine Drive.

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One of the wayfinding trailhead signs is planned near the Sixth Street viewing platform.

CORONAVIRUS

State passes the crest of omicron wave

Risk remains over next several weeks

By GARY WARNER
Oregon Capital Bureau

Oregon has passed the crest of the omicron wave of COVID-19, but still faces a dangerous time before levels drop back to where they were in June, state health officials said Thursday.

"The number of people hospitalized with COVID-19 has peaked and will steadily recede until reaching pre-omicron levels by the end of March," according to the forecast Thursday by Oregon Health & Science University.

But the wave is not over.

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Lawmakers look to make child care more affordable

Gov. Brown calls for a \$100 million boost

By JULIA SHUMWAY
Oregon Capital Chronicle

As Jasmine Casanova-Dean spoke to state legislators at a hearing about child care this month, her 67-year-old grandmother watched her 2-year-old daughter in another room.

Casanova-Dean can only afford professional child care two days a week, so every other day she's left to shift her work schedule, seek help from family or friends or tell her daughter to be patient while she fin-

'MY STORY IS THE SAME AS COUNTLESS OTHER PARENTS STRUGGLING TO FIND AFFORDABLE CHILD CARE. I AND SO MANY OTHER PARENTS SHOULDN'T HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN CARING FOR A CHILD AND WORKING.'

Jasmine Casanova-Dean | Portland resident who spoke at a recent hearing about child care

ishes an important work meeting.

"My story is the same as countless other parents struggling to find affordable child care," Casanova-Dean, of Portland, said. "I and so many other parents shouldn't have to choose between caring for a child and working."

Lawmakers and Gov. Kate Brown are trying to help, though they acknowledge that the state can't do enough to make sure every family that needs child care can afford it.

For state Rep. Karin Power, the

Milwaukie Democrat who leads the House Early Childhood Committee, it's a personal issue. She has two young children in child care.

"It's really expensive, and it's really expensive for everybody," Power said. "I'm hearing right now too from families who can afford care and still can't get it because providers have closed."

Brown has called for \$100 million in new spending. The Legislature's budget writers haven't yet decided how to spend the roughly \$1.5 bil-

lion in extra state money, but there's broad support among Democrats in the majority to spend at least some on child care.

Child care advocates back a plan that would spend about half of the \$100 million sum on grants for new child care providers and existing facilities that plan to hire more staff or otherwise expand their programs.

A San Francisco model

Supporters pointed to the San Francisco-based Low Income Invest-

ment Fund, which reported spending \$168 million to create 273,000 new child care slots between 1984 and 2020. In total, that \$168 million resulted in \$29 billion in monetary benefits to families and communities, according to the organization.

Oregon would use another \$21 million for direct payments to child care workers as incentives to stay in the workplace. Child care workers are paid an average hourly wage of \$14.95, according to the Oregon Employment Department, slightly more than the minimum wage but lower than the starting salaries many retailers and fast-food establishments are offering because of staff shortages.

The last \$4.3 million would go to administrative costs associated with combining the work of two state

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