

IN BRIEF

Temporary closures of Astoria Bridge planned to control cormorants

Temporary closures of the Astoria Bridge are planned over the next several months for experiments to move the cormorant population.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service will attempt to use light- and sound-based techniques to compel the birds to nest elsewhere.

Bridge closures may occur until September, the Oregon Department of Transportation said.

Bird nests and excrement can impede bridge inspections and damage the paint, the transportation department said.

State discloses virus cases at local school

The Oregon Health Authority has disclosed two new coronavirus cases at a school in Clatsop County.

The cases involved students from Lewis and Clark Elementary School, according to the health authority's weekly outbreak report.

The state also revised the virus case count at Suzanne Elise Assisted Living Community in Seaside to 13. Last week, the number was 12.

Fishery managers adopt recreational spring Chinook salmon and steelhead seasons

Fishery managers from Oregon and Washington state have adopted the recreational spring Chinook salmon and steelhead seasons for the Columbia River.

The 2022 spring forecast shows improvement from last year's actual return, with 197,000 adult spring Chinook forecasted to return to the Columbia River mouth, over 44,000 more than last year. Spring salmon season is also expected to have a higher return of 122,900, over 31,000 more than last year.

The new regulations apply downstream of Bonneville Dam and will be in effect for the main stem Columbia River.

Season dates are March 1 to April 6.

The bag limit is two adult hatchery Chinook or steelhead per day, but only one may be a Chinook. Shad may also be retained.

At Youngs Bay, Blind Slough and Knappa Slough, from March 1 to June 15, on days when the main stem Columbia River recreational fishery below Bonneville Dam is open to retention of Chinook, the bag limit will be the same as the main stem bag limits.

Seaside convention center manager to retire

SEASIDE — Russ Vandenberg, the general manager of the Seaside Civic and Convention Center, announced his retirement this spring.

At Wednesday's Seaside Chamber of Commerce breakfast, Vandenberg, 65, said he would be leaving the role he has held since 2005.

"I felt that time was right for me, my age in life and ready to enter the next chapter," he said. "How honored I am to be part of the city and be part of this community that has welcomed me with open arms. I'm just extremely grateful."

As the general manager, Vandenberg oversees the day-to-day management of the convention center that includes administration, marketing, sales, operations, fiscal responsibility and approval of facility contracts.

— *The Astorian*

DEATH

Feb. 25, 2022

ANDREWS, Ninfa Polomata, 75, of Warrenton, died in Astoria. Caldwell's Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

ON THE RECORD

Aggravated harassment

• Gretchen Beth Brooks, 44, of Astoria, was arrested on Monday near Duane and Sixth streets in Astoria for aggravated harassment and theft in the third degree.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

MONDAY

Warrenton Marinas Advisory Committee, 2 p.m., special meeting, City Hall, 225 S. Main Ave.

Seaside School District Board, 4 p.m., special meeting, 2600 Spruce Drive, Suite 200.

TUESDAY

Seaside Community Center Commission, 10 a.m., Bob Chisholm Community Center, 1225 Avenue A.

Clatsop County Fair Board, 5:30 p.m., 92937 Walluski Loop.

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

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

the Astorian

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BEACH DAY



Lydia Ely/The Astorian

Luna, 18 months, and Andrea stand on the beach while their sister, Lynnette, plays with a kite behind them on the Long Beach Peninsula.

State lawmakers unveil \$400 million housing plan

Money for shelters and construction

By PETER WONG
Oregon Capital Bureau

Majority Democrats in the Oregon Legislature have unveiled their plan to spend \$400 million to ease homelessness and promote lower-cost housing, on top of a record \$700 million that lawmakers approved last year.

The amount is in line with what Gov. Kate Brown proposed at the start of the session. It is split between \$165 million for shelter operations, referrals and other emergency housing programs; \$215 million for repairs and construction of lower-cost housing, manufactured-home parks and land acquisition, and \$20 million for help for first-time homebuyers.

Lawmakers told reporters on Thursday they are under no illusions the plan will drastically reduce the number of homeless people or dramatically increase the supply of lower-cost housing in the short term.

But they also said those issues are statewide, not limited to the Portland metro area.

State Rep. Jason Kropf, a Bend Democrat, said he has been carefully reading a series in The Bulletin newspaper recounting the stories of people who do not have housing.

"The series underscores that those who are unhoused and unsheltered are as diverse as our community itself," Kropf said.

"It saddens me to know there are people in my community going through this. But I know it is a top priority for me and this community to tackle this crisis."

Record state tax collections, plus federal support from the American Rescue Plan Act, have boosted the amount of money that lawmakers have on hand to spend.

Most of the money will come through an end-of-session budget bill — and most will go to existing programs run by local governments and community groups.

House Majority Leader Julie Fahey, of Eugene, who leads the House panel, said lawmakers have to fund both emergency and long-term programs.

"Our North Star has to be making investments in housing programs that actually work to get people on the path out of homeless-



Lydia Ely/The Astorian

A workforce housing project is planned for Heritage Square in Astoria.

ness, not just move them from one place to another or warehouse them somewhere out of sight," she said. "These are local safety-net services that catch people before they become homeless and that reach out to help get people off the street and into shelter or housing."

"I want to make clear these investments will not solve every problem overnight. But Oregonians have immediate needs right now."

Stable Homes for Oregon Families, a coalition that has advocated help for low-income renters and homeowners, urged lawmakers to approve the plan.

"We urge swift passage of this immediate state response," the coalition said in a statement. "All children deserve a roof over their head and a safe place to live. Like air to breathe and food to eat, safe shelter is a basic human need and this package will help Oregon ensure that safe shelter for more people in our community."

Immediate needs

Among proposed homelessness spending is \$25 million for Oregon's largest cities and counties — among them the three Portland metro counties, plus Hillsboro, Beaverton and Bend — and \$50 million more for Project Turnkey. Under that program, which is run by the Oregon Community Foundation, 19 former motels have been converted into 867 units with total spending of about \$75 million in the past 18 months or so. Some were created in areas hit hard, such as southern Oregon, by the 2020 Labor Day wildfires.

"We can go back and say that program was a success," Fahey said. "We have prioritized investing these funds into proven programs

that have shown results in getting people on that path out of homelessness."

Another \$8 million will go to task forces, one for each of eight regions largely outside the Portland metro area, that will bring together local governments and community agencies to help people without permanent shelter. It is loosely based on the Joint Office of Homeless Services run by Multnomah County and the city of Portland.

Kropf is the chief sponsor of House Bill 4123, which would set up the framework for the task forces.

Bend City Councilor Anthony Broadman, who also took part in the presentation, praised the Legislature's emphasis on local coalition-building.

The bulk of the money — \$80 million — is for shelter operations, referrals, housing stability and other emergency measures.

Increasing supply

Fahey said during a recent interview that lawmakers will have more work to do in the 2023 session to help figure out ways to boost the supply of housing, which Josh Lehner, a state economist, has estimated is 111,000 units short of what Oregon needs and has not kept pace with population growth. Of that total, Lehner told lawmakers earlier this month that about half is needed by families who

earn half or less of the area's median income, roughly \$40,000.

But Fahey said much of the \$215 million proposed in the plan will go toward such housing. Among the items: \$65 million to repair and preserve existing lower-cost housing so that it stays on the market; \$55 million for new construction, both rentals and owner-occupied housing; \$35 million for manufactured home parks; \$10 million for land acquisition, and \$50 million to complete unfinished projects facing difficulties.

"Oregon needs to build more housing," Rep. Mark Meek, of Oregon City, said. "As a Realtor, I know too many families struggle to make ends meet with rising rents and home prices. It's time to stop making excuses. Oregon needs to build pathways toward home ownership. Expanding home ownership means helping people of all backgrounds generate intergenerational wealth."

Based on a housing analysis yet to come from two state agencies, Fahey said, lawmakers in 2023 will confront how Oregon can increase its amount of housing.

The final \$20 million in the plan is intended to boost agencies that help first-time homebuyers.

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