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Regatta to return from pandemic disruption

Festival planned for August

By ABBEY McDONALD
The Astorian

The Astoria Regatta will return to tradition this summer after opting for virtual and scaled-back events during the past two years of the coronavirus pandemic.

This year, the festival will be held from Aug. 10 to Aug. 13. Signature events will return, including the coronation of the Regatta Queen, the Seamen's Memorial and the Grand Land Parade and the Highwater Boat Parade.

This is Melissa Grothe's first full-scale festival since becoming president of the Astoria Regatta Association last year, which she said makes her both nervous and excited. Grothe was a member of the Regatta Court back in 2005, and since joining the board in 2016 has served as a chaperone, secretary and vice president.

"Growing up here, I watched the parade as a kid and was totally that kid on the sidewalk collecting candy," she said, laughing. "And so it's fun to go from 4-year-old Melissa to now being in charge of the whole festival."

Grothe, who teaches fourth grade at Lewis and Clark Elementary School, said she is looking forward to the parades.

"They're so much fun, and it's just great to see the community out and enjoying the moment, as well," she said.

The Astoria Regatta began in 1894, making it the city's oldest annual celebration. In its long history, it saw previous cancellations due to World War I, the Astoria fire of 1922 and World War II.

The festival was canceled in 2020 due to coronavirus safety precautions. Last year, organizers staged a shortened, one-day festival, which included the Seamen's Memorial and the Highwater Boat Parade.

Gov. Kate Brown announced on Monday that the state will lift an indoor mask mandate next week, along with Washington state and California, following projections of a significant decline in hospitalizations due to the virus. The governor will lift the state of emergency on COVID-19 on April 1.

Annalyse Steele, an alumni of Astoria High School, has been the reigning Regatta

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Water covers the edge of Highway 202 near Astoria in January.

Photos by Lydia Ely/The Astorian

County looks to strengthen emergency management

A new director will lead a county department

By ERICK BENGEL
The Astorian

Clatsop County is looking to strengthen emergency management.

The work of responding to natural hazards and disasters — from fires and floods to a megaquake and tsunami — would belong to a new county department instead of the emergency management office.

Along with the restructure, the county will recruit a full-time department director, who will report to the county manager. Tiffany Brown, the county's emergency manager and director of the Emergency Operations Center, will report to the new director.

The position will be funded by money reallocated from an emergency management coordinator role, which has been vacant since last year.

At a recent county Board of Commissioners meeting, County Manager Don Bohn said he hopes to have someone in place within three to four months.

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Rain and high tides caused flooding near Seaside in January.

Crockett to run for Astoria City Council

She serves as executive director of the Liberty Theatre

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

Jennifer Crockett, the executive director of the Liberty Theatre, intends to run for the Astoria City Council in the November election.

Crockett is the first person to announce her candidacy for the downtown Ward 3 seat held by City Councilor Joan Herman.

Herman has chosen not to seek a second, four-year term.

Crockett, who has led the Liberty since 2016, said she

is invested in the arts and the success of downtown businesses. She said she wants to be part of the discussion in deciding how the city positions itself for the future, especially coming out of the coronavirus pandemic.

"Looking at Commercial, it looks like it's struggling," she said. "We have a lot of empty spaces, or underutilized spaces. We have a really divided community right now."

"I feel like the community needs a win. And oftentimes, that win comes from arts and culture."

Crockett said the arts

are an economic driver in Clatsop County. She also pointed to two times in the past century when the arts helped pull Astoria out of hard times.

Once, she said, was after the fire of 1922, when the Liberty and several other theaters were built. Then, after the economic downturn in the late 1980s and early 1990s, she said the Liberty was renovated and helped spur economic revitalization in the community.

"I would really like to inject arts into the

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Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian
Jennifer Crockett is the executive director of the Liberty Theatre.

Jewell superintendent placed on paid leave

School board says Phillips under investigation

By ETHAN MYERS
The Astorian

JEWELL — Steve Phillips, the superintendent of the Jewell School District, has been placed on paid administrative leave pending an independent investigation.

Following an executive session Tuesday night, the rural district's school board took steps toward finding an acting replacement for Phillips.

The disciplinary action taken against Phillips was announced during the school board's Feb. 15 special session, which also followed an executive session. An investigation began shortly after that meeting, Michael Stahly, the school board's chairman, said.

Stahly declined to disclose why Phillips was placed on leave or the reason for the investigation. Phillips could not immediately be reached for comment.

"We are trying to maintain smooth operations of the district while we are

going through the investigation," Stahly told The Astorian.

Dan Goldman, the superintendent of the Northwest Regional Education Service District, attended Tuesday's meeting to assist the school district with bringing in a replacement.

The school board voted unanimously to approve the job description that was crafted by Goldman, which states that the acting superintendent will be on duty through June.

Cecilia Mialon, a parent attending the meeting, asked the school board about the possibility of the acting superintendent becoming permanent in their role.

"It depends if we find them, we have that need and they are willing," Stahly replied.

The pursuit of a new, full-time superintendent down the road would require another process, said Nancy Hungerford, the school board's general counsel, who attended the meeting virtually.

Goldman and Hungerford said it may be difficult to find many candidates to

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Harbor Freight Tools to open store in Warrenton

Moving into space vacated by Staples

By ETHAN MYERS
The Astorian

WARRENTON — Harbor Freight Tools, a tool

and equipment retailer, has announced plans to open a location in Warrenton.

The Calabasas, California-based company will occupy the vacant building alongside U.S. Highway 101 off Ensign Lane in the Warrenton Highlands shopping center, where Staples had been located until the office supply store closed last year.



Harbor Freight Tools will open a location in the Warrenton Highlands shopping center.

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