

IN BRIEF

Merkley to host virtual town hall for county

U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley is scheduled to hold a town hall for Clatsop County over Zoom at 2:30 p.m. on Saturday.

The event is part of an annual series of town halls the Oregon Democrat holds in each of the state's 36 counties.

"Hearing from Oregonians across the state is critical to doing my job. In these uncertain times, it's more important than ever to hear directly from folks," Merkley said in a statement. "The ideas and priorities I hear about in town halls inform the solutions that I fight to get into federal law, like the projects for Oregon passing into law this weekend to fight wildfire smoke, invest in infrastructure and jobs, and address housing shortages."

The details for how to participate in the town hall are available on the senator's website.

Restrictions in place for snowy plover nesting season

Snowy plover nesting season began Tuesday, along with recreation restrictions from the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department to protect the birds on designated sections of beaches.

Nesting areas will be identified with signage and ropes. On the North Coast, there are several zones, including on the Clatsop, Nehalem and Bayocean spits and in South Sand Lake.

Walking and horseback riding are permitted on plover beaches, but all other recreation is prohibited. This includes walking dogs with and without leashes, driving vehicles, biking, camping, burning and flying kites and drones.

Nesting season ends on Sept. 15.

Western snowy plovers are considered a threatened species by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. There were around 604 breeding adults in 2021, an increase from 55 in 1993 when the plovers were first listed as threatened.

Khan buys former Pizza Hut building in Seaside

SEASIDE — Masudur Khan and Khan Properties Group added real estate to their portfolio south of Broadway.

On Feb. 26, Khan purchased the former Pizza Hut building for \$880,000 from Pacific Coast Investment, based in Gunnison, Colorado.

Built in 1993 as a fast-food restaurant, the building on S. Roosevelt has 3,178 feet and is zoned commercial on a half-acre lot. Pizza Hut closed in 2019 and the building has been vacant since.

Khan said he has no specific plan for the building at this time.

In February, Khan withdrew as a member of Seaside Lodging Hospitality LLC, Doel Hospitality LLC and City Center Hospitality LLC, which operate the Inn at Seaside, River Inn and the SaltLine Hotel.

Khan will focus on new business ventures in real estate development and hospitality as the founder and CEO of Khan Properties Group.

— *The Astorian*

DEATHS

March 14, 2022

PALO, Rodney Elmer, 91, of Astoria, died in Astoria. Caldwell's Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

March 13, 2022

EASTER, Michael Warren, 65, of Westport, died in Westport. Caldwell's Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

arrangements.

March 11, 2022

KENSINGER, Robert John, 68, of Astoria, died in Astoria. Caldwell's Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

March 10, 2022

HISSNER, Jon, 78, of Astoria, died in Astoria. Hughes-Ransom Mortuary is in charge of the arrangements.

MEMORIAL

Tuesday, March 22

NEACE, Jami Lynn Kulbel — Memorial at 11 a.m., Green Acres Memorial Park, 5700 Northwest Drive in Ferndale, Washington. A memorial in Seaside will be announced at a later date.

ON THE RECORD

Weapons charges

• Joel Justin Nethercott, 58, of Arch Cape, was arraigned on Monday on charges of unlawful use of a weapon, being a felon in possession of a firearm, pointing a firearm at another person and menacing. The crimes are alleged to have occurred in November 2020.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

THURSDAY

Seaside Transportation Advisory Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.



BUBBLES

Garth Porteur creates bubbles next to the Columbia River Maritime Museum in Astoria. Porteur, a commercial fisherman, said he recently took his bubble kit to work for some fun with his friends on the boat.

Lydia Ely/The Astorian



Legislative ambush axes youth camp

A medium-security facility in Naselle

By JEFF CLEMENS
Chinook Observer

OLYMPIA, Wash. — The Naselle Youth Camp is likely to end more than a half-century of rehabilitation services after state legislators revived closure language during final negotiations over the supplemental operating budget.

The youth camp is an unfenced, medium-security facility that provides education and treatment for males who have landed in trouble with the law. It has faced repeated threats of closure since 2003 as juvenile justice philosophies have shifted toward keeping young offenders closer to their families.

As of early March, 33 young people were housed at the camp. More than 90 full and part-time employees work at the camp.

The Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families was required to immediately stop placing young people at Naselle, with the goal of closing the camp by the end of June 2023.

Once closed, the property would be turned over to the Washington State Department of Natural Resources for possible conversion into an outdoor school.

Legislators set aside \$250,000 to study and make recommendations on the development of an outdoor school. A report to the Legislature is due by the end of the year.

The end of Naselle Youth Camp would have major ramifications for the Naselle-Grays River Valley School District, which is able to count detainees who attend school at the camp in the district's total student census for purposes of state support.

In addition, the loss of dozens of state jobs would be a serious economic blow to Pacific County, particularly its southeastern quadrant. The youth camp has formed the core of Naselle's economy since it



The Naselle Youth Camp could close.

Ron Baldwin

'THE ONLY PERSON WHO CAN SAVE THE NASELLE YOUTH CAMP IS THE GOVERNOR.'

Washington State Rep. Jim Walsh

was created to make use of a surplus military Cold War air-defense site.

The youth camp's 2022 operating budget, including wages, is \$9.9 million. Its employees earn a median income of \$54,000, well above the county's overall average of about \$40,000.

Beyond economic considerations, youth camp employees and retirees form the backbone of society in the Naselle area — sending children to public school, serving as athletic coaches, volunteering with local charities and many other roles. Other youth workers live on the peninsula and in Clatsop County.

State Rep. Jim Walsh, R-Aberdeen, took to Facebook to voice his displeasure after learning of the surprise.

"The only person who can save the Naselle Youth Camp is the governor," he said. "He can use the 'section veto' power to cut this section out of the supplemental operating budget. I suggest everyone who cares about the Naselle

Youth Camp contact the governor and demand that he veto this section."

Walsh and Rep. Joel McEntire, R-Cathlamet, celebrated what they thought was a win earlier in the legislative session after the youth camp closure was removed from the House's proposed supplemental operating budget.

But few budget actions in Olympia are final until the conference committee process concludes — when Senate and House negotiators hammer out differences in their plans just before adjournment of the session.

A statement released by the Department of Children, Youth, and Families appears to dash hopes that Gov. Jay Inslee will intervene to save the facility.

"DCYF has also prioritized ensuring youth in facilities remain close to their home communities and families," Jason Wettstein, the department's director of communications, said. "While (the) closure is legislatively directed, the decision supports the agency's priority to place youth closer to home and (their) community and recognize the declining state trends in youth incarceration." According to the state-

ment, the need for juvenile rehabilitation centers has dropped by about 73% over the past 22 years.

"I am proud of the work that we have done to put youth first at the Naselle Youth Camp," Felice Upton, the assistant secretary of juvenile rehabilitation, said. "Staff at Naselle have changed the life trajectories for many young people since the facility was established in 1966."

Even with the closure lurking and the situation dire, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees union that represents youth camp employees said it continues to fight to keep the camp open. The union is asking Inslee to veto the closure.

"We are calling on the governor to veto the language that legislators sneaked into the final budget at the last minute," Justin Lee, the union's communications director, said. "This is rather disappointing considering neither the House or Senate budget included the language to close Naselle."

Lee said the closure was "initially in the House budget but was removed after more than 800 people wrote their legislators and urged them to keep it open. Closing the Naselle Youth Camp will hurt an already understaffed and underfunded juvenile rehabilitation program and displace around 100 employees in the community."

the Astorian

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