

IN BRIEF

County reports two virus deaths

Clatsop County has reported two new coronavirus deaths.

A 45-year-old man died of the virus on Jan. 20 at Oregon Health & Science University Hospital. No other information was immediately available.

A 71-year-old man, who had been vaccinated, died on Feb. 21 at a hospital in Portland.

The county said it mistakenly reported the Feb. 12 death of an 80-year-old man twice — on Feb. 16 and again on March 11.

“The Oregon Health Authority continues to reconcile data on COVID-related deaths in the state,” the county said. “When a Clatsop County resident dies in another county or state, there can be a delay in reporting to the local jurisdiction, if the death certificate is not issued by Clatsop County.”

The health authority, meanwhile, reported two new virus cases for the county on Friday and five new cases on Thursday.

Since the pandemic began, the county had recorded 4,579 virus cases as of Friday.

State discloses virus case at local school

The Oregon Health Authority has disclosed one new coronavirus case at a school in Clatsop County.

The case was a student from Lewis and Clark Elementary School, according to the health authority’s weekly outbreak report.

— *The Astorian*

Jackson fifth Oregon county to declare drought emergency

On Wednesday, Jackson County joined four other counties in Oregon declaring a drought emergency.

Low water storage and snowpack levels in southern Oregon prompted counties to declare drought emergencies this year ahead of what’s expected to be an extremely dry summer.

The Pacific Northwest continues to face a prolonged drought, and this year is predicted to be worse than the past two years.

Jackson County commissioners made the drought declaration. It follows declarations by Klamath, Jefferson, Morrow and Crook counties.

“The extended weather forecast for Jackson County predicts higher than normal temperatures and below average precipitation,” Jackson County Administrator Danny Jordan said. “All of these conditions will result in the loss of economic stability, pasture shortages, a shortened growing season and decreased water supply for Jackson County’s agricultural, vineyard and livestock producers.”

— *Jefferson Public Radio*

DEATH

March 22, 2022

KURLE, Richard Jon, 75, of Astoria, died in Astoria. Caldwell’s Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

ON THE RECORD

Burglary

• Rory David Bounds, 40, of Clatskanie, was indicted on Tuesday for second-degree burglary, second-degree criminal mischief and second-degree theft. The crimes are alleged to have occurred in Clatsop County in January 2021.

DUII

• Nancy Ann Gebhardt, 37, of Warrenton, was arrested on Thursday for driving under the influence of intoxicants and a hit-and-run involving property damage at Motel 6 on W. Marine Drive in Astoria.

• Donald Douglas Crist, 53, of Estacada, was arrested on March 17 on U.S. Highway 101 near the Skipanon River for DUII, reckless driving, reckless endangering, carrying a concealed weapon, being a felon in possession of a restricted weapon and possession of methamphetamine.

• John Laurence Reed, 47, of Warrenton, was arrested on March 15 near Oregon Route 104 and Whiskey Road in Warrenton for DUII and driving while suspended or revoked.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

MONDAY

Seaside City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

TUESDAY

Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District Board of Directors, 5:15 p.m., Bob Chisholm Community Center, 1225 Ave. A, Seaside.

Astoria Planning Commission, 5:30 p.m., City Hall, 1095 Duane St.

the Astorian

Established July 1, 1873
(USPS 035-000)

Published Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday by EO Media Group, 949 Exchange St., PO Box 210, Astoria, OR 97103 Telephone 503-325-3211, 800-781-3211 or Fax 503-325-6573. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Astorian, PO Box 210, Astoria, OR 97103-0210

DailyAstorian.com

MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
MEMBER CERTIFIED AUDIT OF CIRCULATIONS, INC.

Circulation phone number:
800-781-3214

Periodicals postage paid at Astoria, OR

ADVERTISING OWNERSHIP

All advertising copy and illustrations prepared by The Astorian become the property of The Astorian and may not be reproduced for any use without explicit prior approval.

COPYRIGHT

Entire contents © Copyright, 2022 by The Astorian.



Printed on recycled paper

Subscription rates
Effective January 12, 2021

MAIL

EZpay (per month).....\$10.75
13 weeks in advance.....\$37.00
26 weeks in advance.....\$71.00
52 weeks in advance.....\$135.00

DIGITAL

EZpay (per month).....\$8.25



Lilly Boothe, 18, of Clatskanie, was crowned Miss Clatsop County 2022 at the Seaside Civic and Convention Center on March 19. Boothe, who is studying speech communications at Oregon State University, has chosen bringing awareness to missing Indigenous women as her social impact. She will compete for Miss Oregon in late June in Seaside. While she lives in Columbia County, she was eligible to compete in Clatsop County because her county does not have a pageant.

Florida teenager arrested for Uppertown fires

By ERICK BENDEL
The Astorian

A teenager who allegedly set fires in Uppertown in January 2018 has been taken into custody.

Preston Blake Powers, 18, of Gainesville, Florida, was arrested on charges of arson by the Alachua County Sheriff’s Office. He had a warrant out of Clatsop County Circuit Court.

Powers was indicted on two counts of first-degree arson and two counts of second-degree arson.

He allegedly started the fires at residences along 38th Street — the street where he lived — and on Harrison Avenue.

The fires alarmed the neighborhood, known for “The Goonies” house, and led to a packed town meeting at Alderbrook Hall with city, police and fire leaders.

“There was some fear in the community,” Paul Charas, a deputy district attorney, said.



Mari Inaba

A fire in Uppertown burned a pickup truck in 2018.

Homes were found with scorch marks. A detached garage was burned. A pickup truck was partially melted.

People speculated at the time that the fires were started by a homeless-looking man whom witnesses had seen peering into

backyards.

“I’m glad that the community has some answers at this point,” Charas said.

He declined to reveal the new information that helped law enforcement tie Powers to the fires.

However, Charas said, an incident from last year, when Powers was arrested for making bomb threats against his Gainesville high school, helped investigators “connect the dots.”

“It’s kind of like a puzzle, and we need one last piece to make sense of that puzzle,” Charas said. “And we finally got that last piece.”

Powers was 14 when he allegedly committed the crimes in Astoria. Charas said his office seeks to charge him in adult court.

“There’s a lot of victims in this case, and hopefully it will give some closure,” he said.

Clatsop County hopes that Florida will extradite him, but it is unclear when that will happen.

Columbia County methanol plant developer shuts down Oregon operations

By CASSANDRA PROFITA

Oregon Public Broadcasting

Northwest Innovation Works, a company backed by the Chinese government that planned to build a controversial methanol plant on the Columbia River, appears to be closing up shop.

The company filed articles of dissolution with the Oregon Secretary of State’s Office last September, which indicates it is closing its Oregon business operations.

The Port of Columbia County had an option agreement with Northwest Innovation Works to lease property at the Port Westward Industrial Park near Clatskanie, where the company had planned to build a methanol facility.

Plans for the plant included using natural gas to make a clear methanol liquid that could be exported to

China and used to produce a plastic manufacturing compound called olefin.

According to Port of Columbia County Executive Director Sean Clark, the company’s option to lease agreement is still in effect.

“The Port of Columbia County is aware of the corporate dissolution by (Northwest Innovation Works) and is taking steps to contact NWIW and find out appropriate next steps,” Clark said in an emailed response.

Columbia County has been trying to rezone about 800 acres of farmland in the area to clear the way for industrial development. The environmental group Columbia Riverkeeper has challenged the rezoning multiple times, and a final decision is still pending at the state Land Use Board of Appeals.

Dan Serres, with Columbia Riverkeeper, said oppo-

nents spent years fighting the project and the pollution it would bring, and they are celebrating their victory.

“The Port Westward site was profoundly ill-suited for a methanol plant,” he said. “It should come as no surprise that this thing is going away. It would serve the port to end the lease with the nonexistent counterparty.”

Last year, Northwest Innovation Works also called off its proposal to build a \$2 billion methanol plant on the Washing-

ton state side of the Columbia River in Kalama after the Washington Department of Ecology denied a key permit for the project.

Ben Morris, a spokesman for the Oregon Secretary of State’s Office, said the company can continue operating for an indefinite period of time after filing to dissolve. However, having active business registration with the state would be required if the company wanted to renew an operating license, he said.

Please ADOPT A PET!



DALLAS

A Tuxedo adult male
American Shorthair

Never underestimate
the power of a cat
to comfort and to
keep your soul company.

See more on the Clatsop Animal
Assistance Facebook and Instagram

CLATSOP COUNTY ANIMAL SHELTER • 861-PETS
1315 SE 19th St. • Warrenton | Tues-Sat 12-4pm
www.dogsncats.org

This space sponsored by CLATSOP ANIMAL ASSISTANCE

WANTED

Alder and Maple Saw Logs & Standing Timber

Northwest Hardwoods • Longview, WA

Contact: John Anderson • 360-269-2500