

KNAPPA

Tax levy to help out firefighters

Voters will decide in May election

By **ERICK BENDEL**
The Astorian

A measure on the May ballot would increase property taxes within the Knappa-Svensen-Burnside Rural Fire Protection District to help the district better respond to emergencies.



Measure 4-214 seeks to raise more than \$3.5 million over five years by levying \$0.7167 per \$1,000 of assessed value to fund staff, equipment and facilities.

If approved by voters, the measure would bring the fire district's total tax rate to \$1.90 per \$1,000.

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Seaside looks at safer routes to schools

Improvements planned near school district campus

By **R.J. MARX**
The Astorian

SEASIDE — A state program aims to make getting to school safer for students.

The Safe Routes to School plan calls for more than \$1.5 million in safety upgrades on Spruce Drive leading to the Seaside School District campus, roadways at the elementary, middle and high schools and on streets throughout the neighborhood.

First on the list is safety at the intersection of Spruce and Alder Drive, about halfway up the hill to the campus, according to a report prepared by the Oregon Department of Transportation, NW Transportation Options, the city and the school district working with the Portland-based Alta Planning + Design.

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A new Fort Astoria sign, updated with language focused on the Native American history of the region, stands at 15th and Exchange streets. Lydia Ely/The Astorian

Trolley hopes to get back on track

A return from pandemic disruptions

By **ABBEY McDONALD**
The Astorian

Just before noon on Friday, the Astoria Riverfront Trolley's lights flipped on. They glowed within its Uniontown barn like the eyes of a creature waking from a long slumber.

The kids waiting at the trolley's first stop began to bounce and pace with excitement as Old 300 rumbled down the tracks for the first time this season. They repeatedly informed their parents of its imminent arrival.

Their parents reminded them to stay behind the yellow line as it rolled to a stop with a hiss.

Longtime volunteer Frank Kemp swung open the cream-colored back door, wearing a conductor's hat and an array of buttons.

"You all have just made my day, you've all got masks on" he said, smiling behind his own mask.

On Friday, the popular attraction returned after hiatuses caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

The trolley initially shut down for 16 months at the start of the pandemic, then reopened for July and August of last year before shutting down again after volunteers



Lydia Ely/The Astorian

The Astoria Riverfront Trolley made its first official run of the season on Friday.

WANT TO RIDE?

The trolley plans to run from noon to 6 p.m. on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays through Oct. 30th.

expressed concern during the surge of the delta variant.

This year, the trolley plans to run from noon to 6 p.m. on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays through Oct. 30th.

Astoria residents Narayan and Mandy Elasmr were among the first to board on Friday, bringing

their 4-year-old daughter, Lucia. "She was 1, the last time she got to ride it," Mandy Elasmr said.

From her mom's lap, Lucia waved to people who gathered outside waterfront businesses to greet the trolley and take photos as it passed.

Kemp narrated the journey, pointing out changes on the waterfront since the trolley's closure last year.

"I don't recognize that," Kristen Harrison said to her husband, Dan, pointing to Buoy Beer Co.'s recent expansion into the building that was previously Video Horizons.

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Oja leading the return of the Scandinavian festival

A longtime educator and swim coach

By **GARY HENLEY**
The Astorian

Barring any unforeseen pandemic interruptions, the Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival is a go for June.

And running the show, with lots of volunteer help, is Carla Oja, the festival's president. It's one of the many roles Oja has had since she and her family moved from Hood River to Astoria in 1973.

Oja was a manager at the former Tapiola Pool, a longtime teacher in the Astoria School District, a swim coach for Astoria High School, and — one of her favorite titles — grandmother, times 11.

She still serves as an instructional assistant at Lewis and Clark Elementary School and as a substitute teacher on occasion.

So, "coming to school at 7:30 a.m. and finding out you're going to be in a classroom all day is kinda hectic," she said. "Always something crazy."

But Oja likes it like that.

Oja came on board the Scandinavian festival in a leadership capacity in 2018, when she and Tony Larson were named as the co-chairs.

The two had no idea what the



Carla and Alan Oja, longtime attendees of the Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival.



next few years would bring, as the festival — now in its 55th year — would be canceled in 2020 and 2021 because of the pandemic.

"The discussion around our house is that if we don't come back now, we might not ever come

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