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Photos by Lydia Ely/The Astorian

The Columbia Memorial Hospital ICU is reflected in a camera lens of the robot used for remote consultations.

Seaside eyes locations for homeless campers

City plans to remove camp off Necanicum

By R.J. MARX
The Astorian

SEASIDE — The city is mapping out places where vans or motor homes could be permitted to stay overnight.

The new rules come as the city faces pressure to clear a makeshift RV camp used by the homeless on city property at Necanicum Drive between 10th and 11th avenues. On Sunday, authorities responded to a spill from a leaking tank from one of the motor homes. The material was taken to the city's wastewater treatment plant for disposal.

Mayor Jay Barber said the spill showed the need for an overnight camping ordinance.

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City to explore ways to increase housing

Population growth triggers state requirements

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

Astoria plans to make changes to the development code over the next several months to remove barriers for new housing construction and comply with state requirements.

Recent counts put the city's population over 10,000, which means Astoria went from being designated as a small-sized city to a medium-sized city. The shift requires the city to comply with state legislation for medium-sized cities, which includes allowing duplexes on residential lots that allow single-family homes.

The changes in state law are intended to respond to the housing crisis across Oregon by increasing affordability and availability.

Alex Murphy, a city planner, told the Planning Commission on Tuesday night that the code amendment process is designed to satisfy state law and incorporate recommendations made in Clatsop County's 2019 housing study.

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Through virtual ICU, patients to get more access to expertise

A partnership between Columbia Memorial Hospital and Oregon Health & Science University Hospital

By ABBEY McDONALD
The Astorian

Patients who check into the intensive care unit at Columbia Memorial Hospital may find themselves speaking to a robot on wheels to get a consultation from a doctor a hundred miles away.

Since July 2020, the Astoria hospital has been working with Oregon Health & Science University Hospital to use the tele-intensivist consult service, allowing providers in Portland to give remote consultations to patients and collaborate with local doctors.

OHSU's intensivists — doctors who specialize in intensive care — speak to patients through a screen wheeled to their bedsides.

Chris Strear, the chief medical officer at Columbia Memorial, said the consultations have allowed the hospital to retain complex cases that might otherwise be transferred to the larger hospital over two hours away.

Backed by nearly \$1 million in federal funding secured this month, Columbia Memorial will have expanded access with the creation of a virtual ICU. The partner hospitals have not settled on a timeline.

Strear said the virtual ICU will increase access to OHSU's infrastructure and regionalize health care services that have been stretched thin during the coronavirus pandemic.

With a virtual ICU, Columbia Memorial's providers will still be going into rooms to care for patients. At the same time, OHSU nurses and physicians will use cameras, audio



Registered nurses Tess Mazur-Tomlinson, center, and Rachel Davidson, front right, turn on the robot used for remote consultations at Columbia Memorial Hospital.

equipment and access to monitors from their control center.

"Instead of getting a snapshot, when the provider here engages with them they're actively monitoring these patients just like we are," Strear said. "So it's as if these patients are in the OHSU ICU, except virtually. So the ability to monitor the patients more closely and more intensely is there."

The Connected Coast Virtual ICU, a partnership between OHSU, Columbia Memorial and Bay Area Hospital in Coos Bay, received \$943,000 in the \$1.5 trillion omnibus spending package President Joe Biden

signed in March.

The funding will go toward installing equipment in each room, rather than having the mobile robot shared between rooms, and help pay the nurses and intensivists working at OHSU, according to Columbia Memorial.

"So it'll help support that a little bit so we can keep the costs down for the patients, and it'll help us prove that this is really a good thing to do," said Judy Geiger, Columbia Memorial's vice president of patient care services.

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Warrenton names finalist for next city manager

Burgener holds top post in Stanfield

By ETHAN MYERS
The Astorian

WARRENTON — The city has named a candidate for its next city manager.

Ben Burgener, the city manager in Stanfield in Umatilla County, is a finalist for the role, the city announced Tuesday. Burgener is

set to be interviewed and evaluated by city staff, city commissioners and residents in the coming weeks.

Prior to being city manager in Stanfield, Burgener was the city administrator in Ada, Minnesota, and the finance manager and administrative services manager for the Utah Department of Transportation.

Warrenton's next city manager will take over for Linda Engbretson, who announced her retirement last year but agreed to work on an interim basis until her replacement is hired.

Engbretson has spent over 25 years with the city, including time as the city recorder. She took the

city manager job on an interim basis in 2016 after Kurt Fritsch resigned, but was offered the position permanently later that year.

Jensen Strategies, a Portland consulting firm that specializes in local government administration, was hired to search for and vet applicants.

The consultant received applications from nine people, said Erik Jensen, the founder of Jensen Strategies.

"This is a candidate's market," Jensen said. "There are a lot of positions open and it has made it very competitive for employers."

The pool was narrowed down to two, but the other candidate with-

drew, Jensen said.

The consultant lists compensation for the position at \$110,000 to \$140,000 a year. Jensen Strategies is also helping Seaside in a city manager search to replace Mark Winstanley, who is retiring.

While there is no certainty on the timeline in Warrenton, Mayor Henry Balensifer said he hopes to have the next city manager hired before June.

A community panel is being formed to assist with the evaluation.

The city is also hosting a virtual meet-and-greet with Burgener at 6 p.m. on Tuesday. Registration to join the session can be found at <https://bit.ly/WarrentonCM>



Ben Burgener

