

HERITAGE SQUARE

## City backs away from workforce housing project

City Council support evaporates after preview of costs

By NICOLE BALES  
The Astorian

The Astoria City Council backed away from a proposed workforce housing project at Heritage Square after getting the first detailed look at the potential cost.

Edlen & Co., a Portland-based developer partnering with the city, estimated the project would cost over \$37.8 million. The developer had hoped to obtain low-income housing tax credits and other government assistance for most of the financing.

But Edlen & Co. wanted the city to transfer land on the downtown block for free, contribute \$2.2 million in gap funding through urban renewal money and offer property tax abatement for 60 years.

The City Council, which was already divided over the project, concluded

that the cost was too high.

“I have a hard time moving forward on a project given the amount of opposition with that significant financial outlay,” Mayor Bruce Jones said at a work session Friday morning. “As the mayor, I feel an obligation and a desire to help the community in a variety of ways — housing is one of them. But also, I have to consider the impact on the community to have a potentially divisive issue going through the spring and summer and the fall and upcoming elections and potentially into next year. And the impact of that on the staff and their ability to get other important priorities done.

“I have been the biggest proponent of this project,” Jones said. “I still think it’s the right thing to do. But I don’t think it’s the right thing at the right time, given the confluence of other circumstances, which frankly make it very bad timing.”

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## Virus outbreak disclosed at care home

One resident has died

By ERICK BENGEL  
The Astorian

A resident of Clatsop Care Health & Rehabilitation in Astoria who had tested positive for the coronavirus died on Friday morning.

The woman, who was in her 90s and had lived at the care home for a few years, had contracted the virus along with several other residents and staff as part of an outbreak first reported to the Oregon Health Authority on March 22.

The most recent round of tests revealed 16 virus

cases: nine among residents and seven among staff, according to Clarissa Barrick, the administrator of the facility, which is under the umbrella of the Clatsop Care Health District.

Of the nine residents, three were unvaccinated against the virus and six were vaccinated and had received an additional booster shot. The woman who died was unvaccinated.

Of the seven staff, one was unvaccinated, two had received their initial vaccine doses and four were boosted, Barrick said.

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## Waterfront master plan nears adoption



Lydia Ely/The Astorian

The Port Commission will review the waterfront master plan on Tuesday.

## A blueprint for the Port and the city in Uniontown

By ETHAN MYERS  
The Astorian

After months of hearing feedback and making refinements, the Port of Astoria and the city will look to adopt the waterfront master plan for Uniontown.

Walker Macy, a landscape architecture, urban design and planning firm, was hired to craft the plan to tackle redevelopment along the Columbia River between Pier 1 and the Astoria Bridge. The Portland consultant collected input through an advisory committee, stakeholder interviews and two public forums in November and December.

The plan, while similar to the version presented in December, has been polished and is ready for review by the Port Commission and City Council.

“The adoption process was something we talked about early on and I think it’s the first step in moving this plan forward,” said Will Isom, the Port’s executive director.

The plan will go before the Port Commission on Tuesday. If approved, it would go before the City Council in the coming weeks.

“It was important particularly to the advisory committee that this plan be something that we’re implementing and not just a plan that gets put on a shelf,” Isom said. “By having both elected bodies adopting this plan, I do think it puts

some urgency behind it and allows both organizations to start moving forward.”

### Highlights

At the first public forum in November, Walker Macy revealed the Astoria Riverwalk Inn, which wraps around the West Mooring Basin, was not a part of the redevelopment plan and recommended its removal due to issues with infrastructure.

However, the replacement of the hotel will have to wait, as Ganesh Sonpatki, who leases the hotel through Param Hotel Corp., still has several years left on his contract with the Port.

A new 60-to-90 room hotel is being recommended by the consultant near where the Riverwalk Inn sits. Walker Macy also indicated that the structure should be built on land, not over water like the Riverwalk Inn, and oriented north to south to minimize obstructions to view corridors.

The removal of the Chinook Building is also being recommended, and because of its vacancy, it was identified as an opportunity for an “early win.”

Private development of marine industrial uses will be sought for the 5-plus acres on Pier 1. Potential uses include manufacturing, seafood processing and shipping.

Additions to Pier 1 would also include several pedestrian friendly features, such as a tower overlook-

ing the West Mooring Basin, a walkway wrapping around the pier and a footbridge. A space designated for picking up and dropping off cruise ship passengers would also be carved in.

Concepts for a market hall and fishing village are also laid out in the plan.

The space where most of the Riverwalk Inn sits would be transformed into a boardwalk, connecting the new hotel, market and fishing village.

Several multiuse structures are scattered throughout the plan.

A particular emphasis is to make the area more suitable for the community, while complementing the city’s working waterfront. In addition to opportunities for private development, a new street, room for parking, a relocated Astoria Riverfront Trolley stop and an improved section of the Astoria Riverwalk are included.

“One of the general themes that has been pretty consistent is that we want to make sure that this planning area serves multiple purposes,” Isom said. “For the Port, it obviously is important that it meets our mission of being an economic driver and a job creator, but also I think it’s important that the community sees this as a win for them and not something that is geared toward visitors and tourists.”

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## Police chief to move to part time

City continues search for a new leader

By NICOLE BALES  
The Astorian

Astoria Police Chief Geoff Spalding will move into a part-time role this month as the city continues the search for his replacement.

Spalding announced his retirement in December after serving as the city’s top cop since 2017. His last day as police chief before working part time is April 19.

Deputy Chief Eric Halverson will serve as the police department’s interim leader until a new chief is hired.

*‘I’M LOOKING FOR SOMEONE WHO’S A GOOD LISTENER. SOMEONE WHO WORKS WELL IN THE COMMUNITY.’*

Brett Estes | Astoria city manager

City Manager Brett Estes said Spalding will support the police department on a part-time basis, focusing on issues such as homelessness and community livability. “I’ve really appreciated his service to Astoria and to the citizens of our community,” he said.

The city completed a recruitment process earlier this year for a new police chief but did not select a candidate. Estes said three people were

interviewed for the position, one of which pulled out during the process. He said none of the candidates were the right fit for Astoria.

The city reopened the job posting and will take applications through the end of next week. If someone is selected in the second round, Estes said it could take a couple of months before they begin work.

“I think Astoria is a smaller community that has a lot of issues that larger communities face,” Estes said. “So we’re looking for someone who is able to be a good leader for the department, to be able to bring new ideas to the department.”

He said the city is also looking for someone who can work through various issues, including emergency dispatch and homelessness — two of the biggest challenges the police department has faced.

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Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Police Chief Geoff Spalding will move to a part-time role on April 19.

