

Commissioners: ‘I think we’re getting to critical mass’

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Commissioner Lianne Thompson, who is running for a third term in South County’s District 5, said she has long advocated for modular housing.

Thompson pointed to a possible collaboration between the Oregon Restaurant and Lodging Association and the TallWood Design Institute to provide modular housing, made with mass plywood panels.

“I’ve been talking about this since 2010; I’m just going to keep talking about it,” Thompson said. “But, I tell ya, I think we’re getting to critical mass. I think it can happen.”

Her challenger, Steve Dillard, an innkeeper from Seaside, said local building codes hamper housing development — a belief shared by Pinkstaf.

Dillard said he spoke with a county employee who wanted to put duplexes on his property.

“The city of Astoria, with



Lydia Ely/The Astorian

A candidates’ forum was held Tuesday night at Clatsop Community College.

all the permits, with all the extra money, with all the engineering that had to go on — it was going to be too cost prohibitive to generate the kind of housing that he was hoping to do,” Dillard said.

Commissioner Mark

Kujala, the board chairman, who is running unopposed for a second term in Warrenton’s District 1, pointed out that the county has put up surplus property in Astoria, Warrenton and Seaside for expressions of interest from

cities and nonprofits.

Making the land available, he said, could lead to affordable housing projects. “That’s the first step,” he said.

When it comes to addressing the scarcity of child care

on the North Coast, Thompson said the county’s role — as it is with other essential services — is to “convene people, bring the right people to the table, get the right data presented, and then find ways to implement those data into solutions that work in the community.”

The county has been hemorrhaging child care options, losing more than half of licensed child care slots since 2017, The Astorian has reported.

Thompson led the county’s child care work group before Kujala and Commissioner Courtney Bangs took over from her.

Wev said the county is likely to help with child care projects such as Astoria’s partnership with Bumble Art Studio to preserve day care options. Bumble is taking over the operations of Sprouts Learning Center, a city-run child care program that was set to close at the end June.

The county has dedicated the federal American Rescue

Plan Act money to expanding child care, Kujala said.

Pinkstaf said child care has been over-regulated. When his grandmother ran a day care, he said, “the regulations weren’t there that are there today.”

“I think we took away the parent’s right to know what’s best for their children,” he said.

Wev responded that she doesn’t think regulation is a bad thing.

“If I’ve learned anything in my career, it is that there are a lot of people ... who have expertise in different areas that I don’t have, and therefore I think that those regulations are often very good,” she said.

Dillard said the county needs to, “when possible, incentivize private child care.”

The candidates’ forum was organized by the American Association of University Women Astoria Branch in partnership with the college, KMUN and The Astorian.

Candidates: ‘Local control is important’

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a home health nurse from Warren and a Democrat, are seeking to replace Johnson. They are running unopposed in the May primaries.

Weber’s run for Senate left an open seat in House District 32, which covers the North Coast. Cyrus Javadi, a dentist from Tillamook, and Glenn Gaither, a retired corrections officer in Seaside, are competing in the Republican primary. Logan Laity, a community organizer and small-business owner in Tillamook, is unopposed in the Democratic primary.

Weber, Busch, Javadi and Laity appeared at the forum Tuesday at Clatsop Community College organized by the American Association of University Women Astoria Branch.

The questions from Chris Breitmeyer, the college president, who moderated the forum, touched on a range of topics, including housing, fishing regulations, abortion and climate change.

When asked to address one issue between mental illness, drug addiction, homelessness and poverty, each candidate took different approaches in their answers.

Laity focused on homelessness, calling it a “humanitarian crisis” and saying he would funnel money to nonprofits that work on the issue.

Javadi eyed tackling drug addiction, a problem which he partially attributed to the fallout from the 2020 vote on Measure 110, which decriminalized the possession of small amounts of drugs and sought to channel money to



Attendees listen to candidates talk during Tuesday’s forum at Clatsop Community College.

Lydia Ely/
The Astorian

addiction treatment.

“If we deal with homelessness, if we deal with mental illness, if we deal with poverty, we’re dealing with the outcomes rather than the source ... I think if we fix our drug addiction problem, we’re going to see a huge reduction in all those other areas,” he said.

Weber, a former mayor of Tillamook, pointed to addressing homelessness, similarly noting that solving one challenge could improve the others.

Busch did not identify one issue, but instead suggested investment in comprehensive health care that would take on all four.

“These are all intertwined issues. I think if we are looking (at) them in separate silos then we will not solve the problem,” she said. “We need ... (to) address them simultaneously so that we can actually get real solutions that are sustainable,

not just for an immediate Band-Aid, but a long-term solution.”

As communities across the North Coast struggle with the lack of housing options, Javadi said tackling the problem should start with the adjustment of outdated land use laws.

Laity pointed to several potential solutions.

“We’re losing our workers, and as your next state legislator, I will work to rework our zoning codes to allow for multifamily housing, expand down payment assistance and make zoning more efficient by providing incentives to our local planning departments to make permitting more efficient and effective,” he said.

Weber and Javadi frequently pointed to government regulations as obstacles, citing what they see as the need for local control in areas like logging, fishing and schools.

“Local control is important. I think this was pointed out to us very poignantly during the pandemic because children were at home and parents finally saw what children were learning and they weren’t happy,” said Weber, a former elementary school teacher.

Busch said the conversation around education has become too politicized. Her concern is not with government overreach, she said, but with a lack of funding.

With the U.S. Supreme Court about to weigh in again on Roe v. Wade, the landmark 1973 ruling on abortion, abortion rights could be an issue in the November election. Busch and Laity indicated their strong support for abortion rights. Weber described herself as “pro-choice from conception to natural death,” while Javadi described himself as “pro-life.”

Cazee: Posed online as a young man, teenage boy

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The U.S. Attorney’s Office in Portland said that from about 2006 to 2010 Cazee posed online as, alternately, a young man and a teenage boy to get teenage girls to trust him and send him sexual images of themselves.

“In at least one instance, Cazee mailed a webcam and a teddy bear to a minor victim and convinced her to produce sexually explicit videos for him using the webcam,” the agency said in a statement.

The victims spoke at the sentencing hearing. One was 15 when Cazee manipulated her into believing she had developed an online rela-

tionship with a young man. Cazee later led her to believe that the boy had died of cancer. Only when federal investigators contacted her did she learn what Cazee had put her through.

Kevin Sonoff, the public affairs officer with the U.S. Attorney’s Office, District of Oregon, said of the victims’ statements, “I think all of us were very impressed and moved by their composure and courage that they demonstrated today.”

The sentencing comes more than a year after the Oregon Court of Appeals overturned Cazee’s Circuit Court convictions for “peeping Tom” crimes that he com-

mitted from about 2014 to 2017.

Cazee had been caught lurking around homes in his neighborhood, peering into windows, and recording victims in states of undress and engaged in private, sometimes sexual behavior.

A jury found Cazee guilty of more than 20 counts that involved invading personal privacy, criminal trespass, stalking and using a child in a display of sexual conduct. He was sentenced to 35 years.

The appeals court found that Cazee’s cellphone, which contained pornographic videos of underage girls, had been seized without probable cause. Once the incriminating

cellphone evidence, and the evidence that stemmed from it, was deemed off-limits, the victims’ testimony could not be substantiated. The case was dismissed.

Clatsop County District Attorney Ron Brown praised federal prosecutors for pursuing a case against Cazee. “I was glad to see him get what he got,” Brown said.

Some of Cazee’s Clatsop County victims were present at his sentencing on Monday, Brown said.

With credit for time served, Cazee will be in his mid-70s when he is released. “The world will be a better place for that length of time,” Brown said.

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Masks: Change went into effect immediately

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district said in a statement Tuesday.

The change went into effect immediately.

“We understand that riders and transit employees will have mixed feelings about this sudden change,” Jeff Hazen, the transit district’s executive director,

said. “We ask that people be kind and respectful of a person’s individual decision to wear a mask or not.”

Masks will still be required on RideAssist vehicles until

further guidance is received, the transit district said.

Masks are also no longer required at Portland International Airport or Seattle-Tacoma International Airport.