



INSIDE

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## Estes to step down as city manager

He will take on a regional role with the state

By NICOLE BALES  
*The Astorian*

City Manager Brett Estes announced Wednesday he will step down after accepting a job with the state.



Brett Estes

Estes, the former community development director and assistant city manager in Astoria, was hired in 2007 and took the helm in 2014 when former City Manager Paul Benoit resigned.

His last day is July 4.

Estes said he will focus on wrapping up projects and bridging the gap while the City Council searches for a new city manager. He has accepted a job as the North Coast regional representative for the state Department of Land Conservation and Development.

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### SEASIDE

## City struggles to find sites for homeless campers

Opposition likely at most locations

By R.J. MARX  
*The Astorian*

SEASIDE — The list of no-camping zones grew at a workshop Monday as city councilors struggle to find places for the homeless to stay overnight within city limits.

When the City Council voted in late April to enact an ordinance prohibiting overnight camping in most parts of the city, including a makeshift camp off Necanicum Drive, they delayed the selection of alternate sites. The ordinance, intended to

provide options for the homeless, puts in place a permit program for temporary overnight camping in RVs and other vehicles.

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Photos by Ethan Myers/The Astorian

The Knappa School District has brought back music education.

## A revived music program sees early success in Knappa

A victim of budget cuts two decades ago

By ETHAN MYERS  
*The Astorian*

Instruments line the wall of a classroom at Knappa High School: horns, percussion, strings, a piano and many more. Some are new, some are up to 70 years old, music teacher Jim Achilles estimates.

The space has just recently begun to resemble its old form.

Achilles recalls removing tables, desks and packed boxes to bring the old band room — which had become a storage room — back to its old glory.

Knappa School District's music program, once a casualty of budget cuts in the early 2000s, is making a comeback.

Several weeks ago near Portland, students from the middle school beginning band, the high school choir and percussion programs gave their first off-site performance, the district's first since 2003.

"I've seen them from their start — some of them just last fall picking up an instrument for the first time — and to see them able to do a solid performance in that kind of setting, under a lot of pressure, was really fun for me to see," Knappa Superintendent Bill Fritz said. "I really value music and the arts and to see our kids thriving in that area is a blast for me."

The festival — Music in the Parks — saw the school district take home several awards. While all three groups took home first place, Achilles noted that since there were not many other schools in their divisions, he put more emphasis on their ratings. The beginning band — which doesn't typically perform at festivals — received a rating of "good," while



Jim Achilles is the Knappa music teacher.

the two high school groups were rated "excellent."

"It was nerve-wracking," Madeline Lindstrom, of the high school choir, said. With only five students in the group, there is nowhere to hide, Achilles said.

The students from Knappa also took home the spirit award, which is given based on attitude and support for the other schools.

"To receive that on their first festival out, to have the festival director acknowledge our district in a way that dealt with student conduct was a tremendous encouragement to my students and my chaperones as well," Achilles said.

When Fritz was brought on as superintendent in the summer of 2020, he wondered why the school district did not have a music program. The community had previously indicated a desire for the program to return, and it soon became a priority for Fritz.

Through the state's Student Investment Account, the opportunity arose to

put Knappa back on the music map.

In December 2020, the school district hired Achilles, who had an extensive background in music and education, to build the program from scratch.

While volunteers and teachers had done some work to keep music intact, the music program had become a distant memory.

Music rooms took on other purposes. The music library was thrown out. Instruments were put in cupboards, with many in desperate need of repair, or as Achilles puts it, "ridden hard and put away wet."

Despite the tall task, by January 2021, music classes were back.

"Just the basics of even how to count — the basic music rhythm and things like that — it was all brand new to almost all of them ... it was really starting everybody at the most basic level," Achilles said.

With Achilles at the helm, the school district now teaches music from kindergarten-through-12th grade.

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## Columbia Memorial raises money for expansion project

Derby-themed event brings in over \$400K

By ABBEY McDONALD  
*The Astorian*

The Columbia Memorial Hospital Foundation raised over \$400,000 for an upcoming project during a Diamond Derby event last weekend.

The Kentucky Derby-themed event on Saturday had over 275 attendees, including Jordan Poyer,

a safety for the Buffalo Bills.

Former hospital board chairwoman Constance Waisanen contributed \$100,000 and the Samuel S. Johnson Foundation donated \$25,000.

Poyer, who went to Astoria High School, contributed \$10,000 through his foundation and donated an autographed jersey and helmet that raised an additional \$14,000.

"It was really nice to have his participation, and he's going to continue to be a partner with us going forward," said Mark Kujala, the executive director of the Columbia Memorial Hospital Foundation.



Kylie Horning Events Northwest/Willow Wisp Photography

Jordan Poyer, of the Buffalo Bills, poses with Amber Hill and Chris Hayward at the Diamond Derby.

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## State education director speaks in Astoria

Gill praises response to pandemic

By ETHAN MYERS  
*The Astorian*

Colt Gill, the director of the Oregon Department of Education, spoke to teachers and staff in the Astoria School District on Monday, reflecting on the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, showing appreciation for educators and eyeing a path forward.

During an in-service day focusing on mental health and related topics, Gill followed

Astoria Superintendent Craig Hoppes in addressing school district employees in the auditorium at Astoria High School.

"My most critical (message) is a 'thank you' ... just a deep appreciation for the work that you have been doing and for holding it together for so many students, families and one another, and for many of you, your own families ... The last two years have been difficult on all levels," Gill said.

Gill, who previously served as Oregon's first education



Colt Gill

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