



INSIDE

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Coast Guard invests at Tongue Point

A \$30 million contract to prepare for cutters

By **ETHAN MYERS**
The Astorian

The U.S. Coast Guard has awarded a \$30 million contract to expand facilities at Tongue Point in preparation for new fast response cutters.

GWWH A Joint Venture, a Watsonville, California-based company, was selected to design and build improvements to infrastructure at Tongue Point, including a fixed pier, two floating docks and several other additions. The contract also includes plans for extensive dredging around the pier.

The upgrades are necessary for the new cutters, with the first one expected to arrive in Astoria in March 2024.

“The expansion of the facilities at Tongue Point is the first critical step in bringing the newest class of cutters to the Oregon Coast,” Coast Guard Capt. Scott Jackson, the commander of Sector Columbia River, said in a statement. “The fast

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Lydia Ely/The Astorian

The Astor Building is the tallest building downtown.

Astor Building to transition out of federal housing program

Low-income apartments are subsidized

By **NICOLE BALES**
The Astorian

The Astor Building, which provides 48 units of low-income housing downtown, has opted to transition out of a federal program that subsidizes the units by next July.

The property owner maintains an annual contract with the Northwest Oregon Housing Authority for the units, which are subsidized through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s moderate rehabilitation program.

The program provides project-based rental assistance for low-income families and can support people who earn up to 80% of the area median income. The amount of assistance varies, but it adjusts a household’s income so people only pay 30% toward rent.

The program, which was designed to upgrade the nation’s housing stock, was repealed in 1991, but the federal government has continued to fund and honor existing agreements.

Under the program, the subsidy is tied to the units, not the renter, and the units have a waiting list. If a tenant were to choose to move, the subsidy would not follow them. They would have to get on the housing authority’s housing choice voucher program waiting list to find new rental housing, which could take years.

When the contract at the Astor Building is terminated next July, res-

idents will be able to remain in their units with tenant-based assistance from the housing authority as long as the unit continues to be offered as rental housing and there is no cause for eviction.

The owner can increase the rent and the difference will be covered, allowing tenants to continue paying 30% of their adjusted monthly income.

However, once the contract expires, there will be no obligation for the units to be rented to low-income tenants when they become available.

Some residents told The Astorian that there was panic and confusion over the Astor Building’s one-year notification letter and what it would mean for them come next July.

Paul Caruana, a contractor and designer who owns the building, said there are pros and cons to the program, but ultimately “all we’re doing is switching the payment that we use with HUD.” He said that has been the message communicated to residents.

“Everybody living in the building can stay in the building,” he said.

Prominent landmark

The Astor Building, formerly the historic John Jacob Astor Hotel, is the tallest building downtown and a prominent landmark.

The 14th Street building opened with subsidized one-bedroom and studio units in 1984 after sitting vacant for about two decades.

Caruana purchased the building with a business partner in 2008. He became the sole owner in 2015, and that same year approached the City Council for \$150,000 in urban renewal funds to help restore the façade.

The City Council granted the

request with the caveat that at least half of the apartment units remain for low-income tenants. Caruana said he has since paid off the funds, adding that the low-income provision was only a condition while the money was still owed.

The two-story lower portion of the building houses offices and retail shops and The Ruins, an event venue. The top six stories of the L-shaped building house 66 apartments.

Caruana said some of the units were converted to market rate before he purchased the building, and since then some more have moved out of the federal program for a variety of reasons.

In the past, Caruana said it could take months to get some of the subsidized units filled. Meanwhile, he said, people looking for market-rate housing at the building were being turned away.

He said the situation improved when he decided to give the housing authority a time frame for units and convert them out of the program the following year.

Caruana credits the infusion of more market-rate units with improving some of the behavioral problems the building experienced early on. He said providing subsidized housing was a learning curve.

Some people who were moving in were not fit to live on their own without support, he said. He later learned he could change the criteria for new tenants to ensure they could live on their own.

Over time, Caruana identified the criteria important to keeping the building safe and enjoyable for everyone.

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Wright to run for Seaside mayor

Hopes to succeed Barber in top post

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

SEASIDE — City Councilor Steve Wright has announced a campaign for mayor in the November election.

Wright, who was appointed to fill a council vacancy in 2016 and elected to a four-year term in 2018, will seek to replace Mayor Jay Barber, who is not running for reelection.

Wright serves as council president. He is also the board president of the Seaside Museum & Historical Society.

“I have a real passion for Seaside,” said

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Library levy to go on ballot in Warrenton

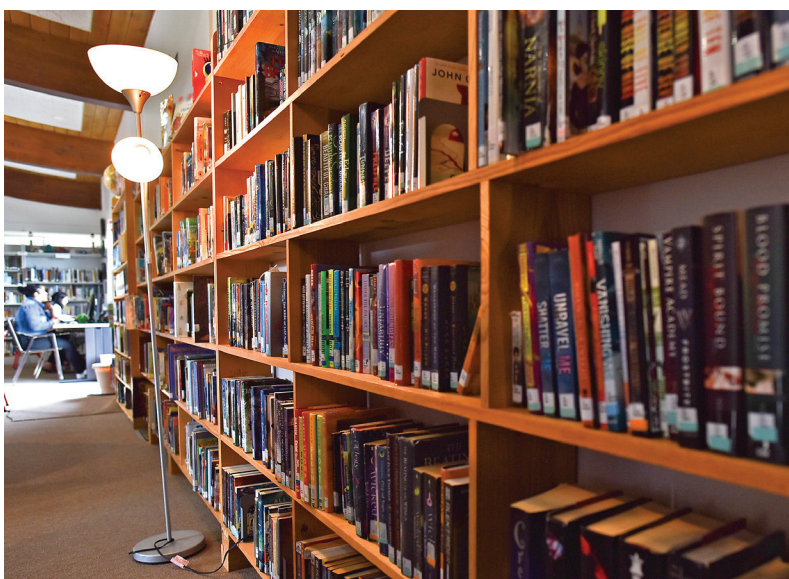
A 5-cent increase to the tax rate

By **ETHAN MYERS**
The Astorian

WARRENTON — Voters will weigh a levy in November that would increase staffing levels and help fund operations at the Warrenton Community Library.

The City Commission voted Tuesday to approve the library board’s recommendation and put a five-year local option levy on the

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Colin Murphey/The Astorian

A levy to finance improvements at the Warrenton Community Library is headed for the ballot.

Children eligible for summer meals program

Free food provided at several locations

By **ALEXIS WEISEND**
The Astorian

With many families facing the lingering effects of the coronavirus pandemic and rising costs due to inflation, a summer meals program could help fill the gaps for children.

The Oregon Department of Education is working with local school districts to distribute food to children 18 and under at several sites across Clatsop County.

“These free meals may be the only nutritious meal of the day

for some children,” Patti Atkins, a public affairs specialist with the Department of Education, said in an email.

The distribution sites, which include Tapiola Park and Fred Lindstrom Memorial Park in Astoria, can be found via the Department of Education’s website.

Grant Roe, who hands out meals at Fred Lindstrom Memorial Park, said he wishes more children participated. He said he usually has leftover food when he leaves.

Mike Kelly, the food services director for the Astoria School District, said the distribution sites

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