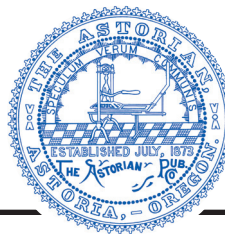


# OPINION



# the Astorian

editor@dailyastorian.com

Founded in 1873

**KARI BORGEN**  
Publisher

**DERRICK DePLEDGE**  
Editor

**JOHN D. BRUIJN**  
Production Manager

**SAMANTHA STINNETT**  
Circulation Manager

**SARAH SILVER**  
Advertising Sales Manager

## PUBLISHER'S NOTEBOOK

# Readers share opinions of The Astorian

**T**he week before COVID-19 lockdowns were announced in 2020, The Astorian invited readers to a forum at the Astoria Library to ask what subscribers valued in their newspaper and what they thought could be improved.

The feedback was valuable and pointed out ideas to pursue for new content.

One week later, the newsroom's attention made a sudden shift to the COVID crisis at hand and how to meet our mission to inform the public of health, safety and practical measures to keep our community strong. The advertising department pivoted to help businesses communicate changes in hours and delivery options. Internally, we scrambled to develop communications to allow employees to work from home and address keeping those in the building safe while still serving our customers.



**KARI BORGEN**

All of which explains a bit of a pause in working on some of those reader ideas.

That's not to say we haven't made improvements during the past two-plus years. Part of serving our community and customers has been a significant shift to digital-only subscriptions, which have grown from 12% of our total subscriptions to 26%. The Astorian's total print and digital subscriptions has grown by over 5% in the past two years, something to be proud of in a time when so much of what the public hears about newspapers nationwide is that the industry is dying.

Given the remarkable changes to our everyday lives in the past few years, we conducted another reader survey in May to see if our subscribers' interests had changed. Not surprisingly, nearly equal numbers say they primarily discover their local news from the print and web versions of the newspaper — 54% print, 52% online. Since nearly all respondents were subscribers, those who primarily discover news through social media was only 26%. (Respondents could choose more than one answer.)

The Astorian has grown email newsletters as a way to provide quick bits of information to subscribers and nonsubscribers on topics of interest like breaking news, headline news, weather, events and sports. As a result, 17% of readers responded that they rely on learning news by email.

When asked, “What topics interest you reading The Astorian?” Over 80% of respondents said local news, local business, local government. Public safety reports ranked highly at 68%, as did obituaries, opinion, music, outdoor activities, food and dining, prioritized by about 50% of respondents.

In every survey and forum, we ask our subscribers



### 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.

Construction of a new \$30 million fast response cutter is under way at Tongue Point, including a final pier, two floating docks and several other additions. The contract also includes plans for exterior lighting around the pier.

The upgrades are necessary for the new cutters, which the first one expected to arrive at Astoria in March 2023.

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 first



### Astor Building to transition out of federal housing program

Low-income apartments are subsidized

By **NICOLE BALES**  
*The Astorian*

The Astor Building, which provides 150 units of low-income housing, has signed an agreement that will see the building 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 building, which is subsidized through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Section 8 program.

The program provides per-unit-based rental assistance for low-income families and can require people who can pay up to 30% of the area median income. The amount of assistance varies, but a family's household income can only be 80% of the area median income.

The program, which was designed to replace the Section 8 program, was reported in 1991, but the federal government has continued to fund and honor existing agreements.

Under the program, the subsidy is tied to the unit, not the tenant, and the owner has a waiting list. If a tenant is on the list, they can move in. If they don't follow them, they would have to get on the waiting list.

Wright serves as council president. He is the board president of the Historic Museum & Historical Society, said “There are great people for Astoria,” said

When the contract at the Astor Building is terminated next July, residents will be able to remain in their units with month-to-month agreements from the housing authority. An long-term lease would be needed to ensure 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 they were upset and confused over the Astor Building's one-year agreement. However, the city and Paul Curran, a contractor and developer who owns the building and has an open and open to the program, but ultimately “if we do it, it is including the program that was one with HUD.” He said that but the housing can stay in the building, he said.

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

The 14th Street building opened in 1914 after being vacant for almost 15 years.

Curran purchased the building with a housing program in 2009, but became the sole owner in 2013, and that same year approached the City Council for \$150,000 in rent rescue funds to subsidize the building.

The City Council granted the

request with the caveat that at least half the apartments must remain for low-income tenants. Curran said he has the units paid off the building, but that the low-income program was only a condition while the money was still owed.

The housing authority portion of the building houses office and retail shops and the office on even floors. The top six stories of the L-shaped building house 60 apartments.

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

In the past, Curran said it would take months to get some of the units, and he said that some of the people looking for market 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.

Curran credits the inclusion of more market-rate units with improving the building's financial picture. The building experienced early on the bid providing additional housing was a turning point.

The housing authority was looking for a way to live on their housing list and to be on the housing list, he said. He later learned that the housing authority was open to market rate units to ensure they could live on their own.

Over time, Curran identified the criteria important to keeping the building safe and profitable for everyone.

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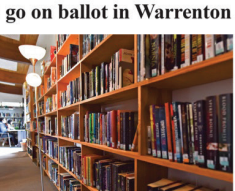
### Library levy to go on ballot in Warrenton

A 5-cent increase to the tax rate

By **ETHAN MYERS**  
*The Astorian*

WARRENTON — Voters will weigh a 5-cent increase to the tax rate to fund improvements at the Warrenton Community Library.

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



A key to Resource Improvements at the Warrenton Community Library is needed for the ballot.

### Children eligible for summer meals program

Free food provided at several locations

By **ALEXIS WEISND**  
*The Astorian*

With many families facing the lagging 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 around nine areas in Clatsop County.

“These free meals may be the only nutrition meal of the day for some children,” Paul Adin, a public affairs specialist with the Department of Education, said in an email.

The distribution sites, which include Tapscott Park and Folsom-Lindeman Park in Astoria, can be found via the Dept website: <https://www.oregon.gov/DEU/Pages/Summer-Meals.aspx>.

Greg Rice, who heads the program at Folsom-Lindeman Park, said he will have staff on hand and will have food on hand for the program.

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### Local news is the focus at The Astorian.

for their feedback on improvements we can make to the paper. We are in turn chagrined, delighted and intrigued by the responses we receive to those comments.

As noted in a column about our 2019 survey, Astorian readers don't agree on what should be included in our pages — or what should be left out — with the exception of local news. In an open-ended question about how The Astorian can improve, there were differ-

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Common sense

It amazes me that with the constant warnings, drills and increases in emergency management procedures and readiness regarding the Cascadia Subduction Zone, and the impending “Big One” that could hit at any time, that the main concern about offshore wind proposals seems to be the effect it will have on fishing.

How far will a tsunami carry a floating wind turbine? Whatever happened to common sense?

**WILLIAM BELL**  
Astoria

### Tough on crime

In his letter to the editor (June 30), former Clatsop County District Attorney Joshua Marquis correctly states that Betsy Johnson was the only Democratic state senator to vote against Senate Bill 1008, the reform of juvenile Measure 11, that was championed by former House Speaker Tina Kotek.

In 2019, the Oregon Legislature passed the bill with support from the majority of Democrats, Republicans and independents in Oregon, as well as civil rights groups and many retired judges.

Enacted during the “super predator” hysteria of the early 1990s, Measure 11 emphasized punishment over rehabilitation. Under the law, kids as young as 15 could be charged as adults, and receive adult sentencing without parole, nullifying the possible benefits of maturation and rehabilitation. Subsequent research demonstrated that a person's brain is not fully formed until their mid-20s.

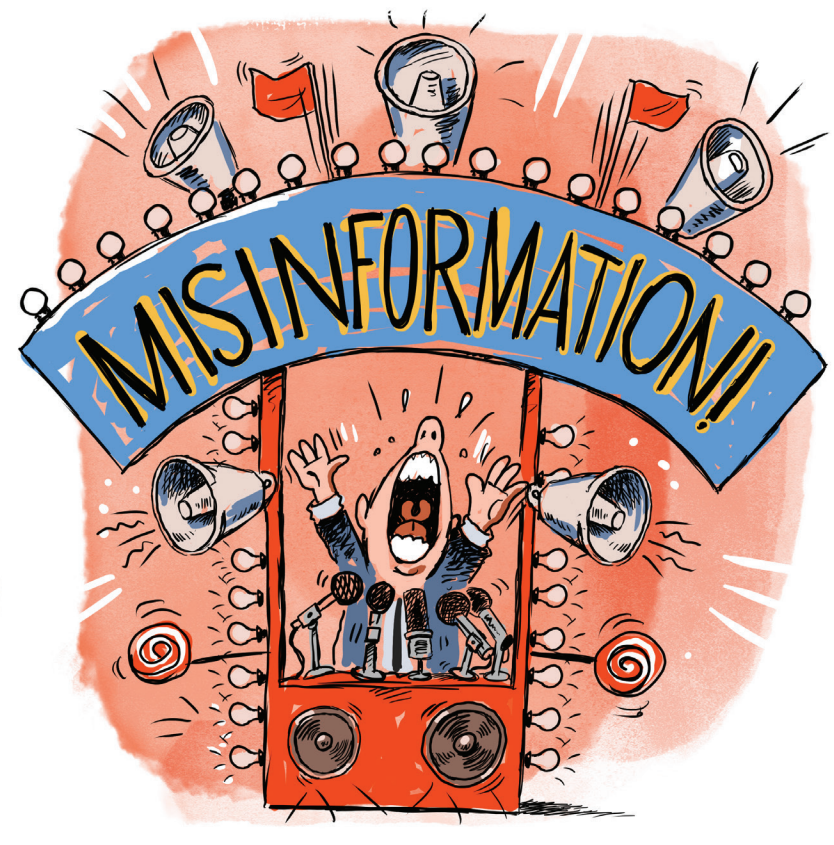
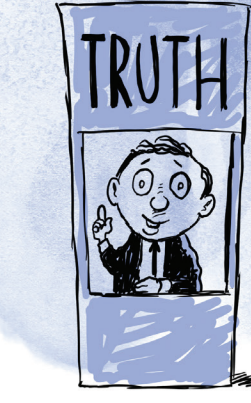
Measure 11's racist underbelly also became clear. Black and Latino kids were having their lives ruined by district attorneys who, under Measure 11, charged them as adults far more often than white kids guilty of the same crimes. Apparently that didn't matter to Johnson.

These revelations prompted a series of U.S. Supreme Court decisions leading to reform in many states, including Oregon.

Thanks to Kotek and the Democrats, kids in Oregon can now have their individual cases considered in juvenile court, rather than finding themselves in adult court headed for the penitentiary, sometimes just to bolster a district attorney's reputation as being tough on crime.

**ROGER DORBAND**  
Astoria

*guyparsons.com*  
politicalcartoons.com



How the web works

## LETTERS WELCOME

Letters should be exclusive to The Astorian. Letters should be fewer than 250 words and must include the writer's name, address and phone number. You will be contacted to confirm authorship. All letters are subject to editing for space, grammar and factual accuracy. Only two letters per writer are allowed each month. Letters written in response

to other letter writers should address the issue at hand and should refer to the headline and date the letter was published. Discourse should be civil. Send via email to editor@dailyastorian.com, online at bit.ly/astorianletters, in person at 949 Exchange St. in Astoria or mail to Letters to the Editor, P.O. Box 210, Astoria, OR., 97103.

### All of us

**L**isten up, Astorians! Right now our city government is writing a homeless camping ordinance that will affect all of us.

If passed, certain property owners in residential areas (think church parking lots and vacant commercial industrial

land) could allow homeless persons to set up a tent or sleep in a motor vehicle on their property. While some “restrictions” would be set, police won't be able to monitor that all “restrictions” are maintained. It will be up to you to file a complaint against your neighbor, a thing most of us don't want to do.

My husband and I have experience

with a homeless camper next to us, exactly what the city is proposing. Please know that there will be fights, police will be called, motors will run at night (to keep warm), garbage will attract rats that find their way to your property and poison and traps will be used to eradicate them.

“Good fences make good neighbors,” said Robert Frost in his poem, “Mending Wall.” Good ordinances also make good neighbors. Permitting homeless camping in any neighborhood doesn't make for a good ordinance. It pits neighbor against neighbor and it results in neighborhoods with unsanitary conditions, noise, pollution and tension.

The City Council will discuss the camping ordinance this Monday at 7:00 p.m. in the council chambers. If you are concerned about the safety, health and peace in your neighborhood, attend the council meeting or write Mayor Bruce Jones and your counselor.

**LINDA OLDENKAMP**  
Astoria