

IN BRIEF

Seaside voters to consider renewal of local option tax for fire department

SEASIDE — Voters in November will be asked to renew a five-year local option tax to provide funds for the purchase of a training tower and a training and safety officer for the Seaside Fire Department.

The last operation levy, passed in 2017, approved \$2 million over five years for fire equipment and personnel. The new levy will show a decrease from 34 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value to 33 cents per \$1,000.

If passed in November, the new levy would take effect in November 2023.

“We happen to be one of the bigger agencies in the county and so we tend to help out our smaller agencies,” Fire Chief Joey Daniels said. “What we do in Seaside also affects the rest of the county and a lot of decisions we make.”

College hires historic preservation instructor

Clatsop Community College has hired Ryan Prochaska as the next instructor of the historic preservation program.

Prochaska, who will start in the fall, has an extensive background in historic preservation, including time as an instructor of a similar program at a community college in Iowa.

Prochaska replaces Lucien Swerdloff, who helped found the program and retired earlier this year.

— *The Astorian*

Schrader endorses Johnson for governor

U.S. Rep. Kurt Schrader was spurned by members of his party in May, losing his bid for the Democratic nomination to keep his seat.

Now Schrader is doing some spurning of his own.

The seven-term congressman announced Tuesday he’s endorsing unaffiliated candidate Betsy Johnson over Democrat Tina Kotek in this year’s hotly contested race for Oregon governor.

“People are concerned with the far right and they’re exhausted with the extremism on the left,” Schrader said in a statement released by Johnson’s campaign. “It seems the extremes on both sides just want to fight, leaving the rest of us frustrated. I believe Betsy Johnson is the leader Oregon needs to move us forward.”

Schrader’s decision to oppose his party’s nominee is not surprising — he hinted he was likely to do as much in an interview with KATU last month.

And Schrader has much in common with Johnson. He has long been Oregon’s most centrist congressional Democrat, and recently angered members of his party by voting against a major pandemic-relief package and a proposal to allow Medicare to negotiate prescription drug prices.

Schrader lost in the primary for the 5th Congressional District to the more progressive Jamie McLeod-Skinner.

— *Oregon Public Broadcasting*

MEMORIALS

Friday, July 22

WALKER, James L. — Celebration of life from 1 to 4 p.m., Warrenton Community Center, 170 S.W. Third St. in Warrenton.

Saturday, July 23

MacDONALD, Rob-

ert R. “Rob” — Celebration of life and small service from 1 to 4 p.m., Peninsula Church Center, 5000 N Place in Seaview, Washington. Reception with light refreshments follows. Please feel free to share a story.

ON THE RECORD

Criminal mischief

• Randall Edwin Van Osdol, 44, of Astoria, was indicted on Friday on counts of first-degree criminal mischief and failing to perform the duties of a driver after allegedly being involved in a crash. The crimes are alleged to have occurred in January.

Theft

• Brianna Lucille Knapp, 38, of Seaside, was arrested on Saturday at Walmart for sec-

ond-degree theft.

DUI

• Ginny Eileen McGrish, 39, of Astoria, was arrested on July 12 on U.S. Highway 26 near Little North Fork Nehalem River for driving under the influence of intoxicants and reckless driving.

• Mark Allan Stafford, 35, of Portland, was arrested on July 11 on U.S. Highway 101 in Seaside for DUI and reckless driving.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

THURSDAY

Seaside Transportation Advisory Committee, 6 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

TAKING AIM

Xander Smith, of Yelm, takes aim during the Bear River Archers 3D trophy shoot last weekend.
Luke Whittaker/Chinook Observer



Ilwaco mayor rebuffed over RV park dispute

City Council orders Cassinelli to recuse

By BRANDON CLINE
Chinook Observer

ILWACO, Wash. — The City Council has voted to order Mayor Mike Cassinelli to recuse himself from all discussion regarding the dispute at the Beacon Charters and RV Park.

The vote came after Cassinelli, the former owner of the RV park, made an emotional speech last week defending his actions as a private citizen and challenging the council over what actions the city could take in the matter.

Cassinelli has faced some criticism from RV park residents and others at council meetings in recent months over his \$1.5 million sale of the business to Michael and Denise Werner, who moved aggressively to try to evict long-term renters before the sale had even gone through. The Werners have since taken the remaining tenants to court to attempt to have them lawfully evicted.

But public criticism from fellow elected city officials had been generally sparse until the July 11 meeting. The RV park dispute was on the meeting’s discussion agenda, but two city councilors made mention of the dispute during their individual reports that are given regularly toward the beginning of meetings.

City Councilor Dave Cundiff said that he had the chance to talk with some of the remaining RV park residents during a visit, as well as the county’s housing program administrator. He also said he was beginning to conduct research “on the hypothetical case of a hypothetical mayor, whose million-dollar financial interest might be influencing city legislation.”

“It turns out that’s a pretty complicated issue, and one in which the answers about the liability to the city are not completely clear. But I’m beginning the research on that,” Cundiff said.

City Councilor Margarita Cullimore took exception to some parts of the written briefing that the city had prepared for the council on the issue, but was quickly cut off by Cassinelli and told that she should wait to detail her objections until the council reached that discussion item on the agenda.



Chinook Observer

The Beacon Charters and RV Park on Port of Ilwaco property has been a source of city concern.

ILWACO MAYOR MIKE CASSINELLI HAS FACED SOME CRITICISM FROM RV PARK RESIDENTS AND OTHERS AT COUNCIL MEETINGS IN RECENT MONTHS OVER HIS \$1.5 MILLION SALE OF THE BUSINESS TO MICHAEL AND DENISE WERNER.

Cullimore also said she has received many inquiries — in-person, by phone, by text and by email — from other peninsula residents, who she said “are very concerned about how things are being done in Ilwaco.” She also lamented persisting issues at the RV park, such as overflowing trash cans and problems with receiving mail, as well as the city’s inability up to that point to schedule a joint meeting with the Port of Ilwaco, which hosts the RV park.

A meeting has since been scheduled for Tuesday, as the port had asked to put off scheduling a meeting until a commissioner vacancy on its board had been filled.

Mayor launches defense

When Cassinelli kicked off discussion of the RV park dispute, he said that the city has to be careful moving forward when dealing with the issue because of the legal action the Werners have taken against the remaining tenants.

Cassinelli then said he’s “getting tired of being thrown under the bus.” The mayor referenced a story that ran in the July 6 issue of the *Chinook Observer*, which cites him as saying that there is little the city can do in the conflict. He also mentioned a county health and

human services official who was cited in the story as saying that there was little the county could do other than what it has already done, which has been to support the tenants and help connect them with legal services to ensure their rights are being upheld.

“Going forward, let me say something to you: Mike Cassinelli has spent over \$10,000 keeping the power turned on in that RV park, and part of that power has kept the cable turned on so everybody down there who has internet can have internet,” Cassinelli said, adding that the Werners haven’t signed off to transfer the electric bill over to them.

“If I take my name off of that account, they’re going to cut the power,” he continued. “I have to go down and sign the termination slip on the power. I have not signed that termination slip, and the reason I haven’t done it is I don’t want those people to have a day without power. So don’t say Mike Cassinelli hasn’t done anything. I’d like to see somebody else step here and say that they’ve put money forward like Mike Cassinelli, mayor of the city of Ilwaco, has.”

Cassinelli acknowledged he did say that there was little the city could do, and asked for anyone who said there are things the city could do to come forward and explain what can be done.

At that point, Cundiff called for a point of order, but Cassinelli said he still had the floor. Cundiff explained that a point of order takes

precedence over any other business.

“My point of order is that the mayor is conflating the mayor’s role — in my opinion — with the role of a private citizen,” Cundiff said. “It’s perfectly fine for the mayor to talk to the council as a private citizen. It is not fine to use the mayor’s chair, as chair of the meeting, to do it.”

Cassinelli did not appear to object to the point of order, and continued by asking, in his role as the mayor, what the city can do that it hasn’t already done.

“Make a list. I want somebody to tell me right now what we can do that we haven’t done,” he said.

Left the room

Cundiff then moved to have the council ask the mayor to recuse himself “from all matters pertaining directly, or indirectly, to the Beacon RV park.” The motion was seconded by Cullimore. Cassinelli acknowledged the motion and the second, and called for any further discussion of the motion among the four councilors present at the meeting — City Councilor Jonathan Quittner was absent.

With no discussion being heard, he called for the vote. Cundiff and Cullimore quickly voted in favor of the motion, and newly appointed councilor, and former mayor, Gary Forner voted in favor soon after. Cassinelli then asked for those opposed to the motion. It was not clear whether City Councilor Matt Lessnau voted to oppose the motion or abstained from voting.

The mayor then left the room that the in-person meeting was being held in at the Ilwaco Community Building. Lessnau took over to chair the meeting, and Cassinelli did not return until the discussion surrounding the Beacon RV park dispute had ended.

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