Astorian

Lydia Ely/The Astorian

Flood control has been a challenge in Warrenton.

Warrenton updates emergency operations plan

The first update in 12 years

By ETHAN MYERS
The Astorian

WARRENTON — The city has made crucial updates to an emergency operations plan to help better prepare for emergencies and natural disasters.

The comprehensive, all-hazards plan provides the city with a framework for readiness, response and recovery. The plan also details how agencies and organizations in the region can coordinate to maximize resources and assistance.

The effort was driven by a state homeland security grant acquired by Clatsop County in 2018, but the process was delayed due to the coronavirus pandemic. After receiving an extension, the county tasked Stantec, an international consulting firm, with performing updates to Warrenton and Gearhart's emergency operations plans.

Warrenton's refreshed plan was adopted by the City Commission in July.

Mayor Henry Balensifer said updating the plan was his No. 1 priority since he took office.

"It takes a long time in government to get anything done, but we've had a lot of staff turnover in areas where we would normally work on (emergency management)," he said. "I'm just grateful that we're finally doing that."

The three-month process took feedback from several levels of city staff, Police Chief Mathew Workman and Fire Chief Brian Alsbury, as well as community organizations.

Updating the plan was necessary to meet state and federal standards, but also to reflect the changing needs of Warrenton since the plan was last adopted in 2010.

According to the 2020 census, Warrenton was the fastest-growing city in the county over the past decade, with a 25.8% rise in population.

WARRENTON WAS THE FASTEST-GROWING CITY IN THE COUNTY OVER THE PAST DECADE, WITH A 25.8% RISE IN POPULATION.

"One of the big, critical drivers for a plan update in a situation like this is making sure that the document is pointing to the right tools, the right resources, the right partners that (the city) can bring to bear," Zane Beall, a senior emergency planner for Stantec, said.

Coming into compliance with requirements could also open the door for receiving funding related to emergency management, Matthew Lieuallen, a principal planner for Stantec, added.

Struggles with flooding

In January, heavy rain led to an overwhelmed stormwater system in Warrenton, causing widespread flooding. City crews covered manholes with tarps, plastic and sandbags as the system reached inflow limits.

In looking for additional state resources at the time, Balensifer declared an emergency.

The mayor said it became clear during the city's struggle with flooding that several elements of the emergency operations plan were outdated, underscoring the need for an update.

Since the plan is a playbook for all hazards, it does not list flood mitigation strategies, Beall said, but the city's experience with flooding allowed the consultant to "review some of those lessons learned and apply them through an all-hazards lens."

Moving forward, Balensifer viewed it as important for the city to familiarize itself with the plan as it tackles more frequent emergencies related to flooding and levee breaches.

"If I had my perfect world, we'd update our EOP probably every five, seven years if possible. … Part of that is because, when you have a hand in creating a plan, you have a lot more knowledge about that plan instead of reading it. You've developed it, right?" he said. "In addition to that, it helps keep fresh in everybody's minds how we operate. … So, being able to focus on making sure that we know what we're doing, and have that muscle memory."

City enters contract to improve emergency communication

Challenges persist at dispatch center

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

When a winter storm disrupted multiple emergency communication systems across the region, agencies on the North Coast had to wait several weeks for malfunctions to be addressed.

Interim City Manager Paul Benoit said Astoria's dispatch center had to wait longer for its technical support provider, Day Wireless Systems, to respond because the city did not have a contract with the provider.

"One problem with this approach is that regardless of the severity of a particular issue in the system, Day Wireless gives priority service to contracted agencies," Benoit told the City Council during a meeting Monday night.

MORE INSIDE
- City Council approves resolution for library bond • A8
- City Council outlines legislative priorities • A8

Long-term cleanup of ferry uncertain

Mayor Jones has asked for help from the state

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
KMUN

The U.S. Coast Guard said it still isn't clear what caused the historic Tourist No. 2 to capsize last week at a floating dock west of the Sixth Street viewing platform where the vessel had been moored for some time.

No one was onboard the ferry when it sank. Good Samaritan boats that responded when the vessel began to take on water and passersby have reported fuel leaks and a strong smell of diesel in the air.

Petty Officer 3rd Class Diolanda Caballero, a spokesperson for the Coast Guard, said it isn't clear if any other pollutants besides diesel have leaked, but the Coast Guard is still evaluating the pollution threat.

Cannon Beach adjusts camping ordinance to reflect homelessness

Overnight stays from 9 p.m. to 7 a.m.

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

CANNON BEACH — The City Council amended a camping ordinance Tuesday night to set parameters for when someone can sleep on public property.

The city is one of many across Oregon adjusting camping ordinances to respond to federal court rulings and state legislation that prohibit police from enforcing illegal camping on public property unless there are adequate shelter spaces available.

Local governments that do not have adequate shelter space have the option to regulate camping by detailing the time, place and manner people can sleep outdoors so camping can be enforced everywhere else.

In Cannon Beach, the ordinance allows people to set up temporary camps overnight from 9 p.m. to 7 a.m. in their cars, tents or other temporary structures.

Cannon Beach bans electric scooter rentals

A preemptive move by the City Council

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

CANNON BEACH — Businesses that rent electric scooters and other motorized vehicles will not be allowed to operate in the city following an ordinance adopted by the City Council on Tuesday night.

The new rule is an effort to get ahead of electric scooter rental companies that have expressed interest in expanding into the city. The ban was recommended while drafting the city's transportation system plan, which is expected to come before the council in the coming months.

The ordinance prohibits the rental of "emerging

Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald

Cannon Beach has banned electric scooter rentals.

mobility devices," which includes motorized scooters, skateboards, mopeds and monowheels. People would still be allowed to ride personal motorized vehicles.

Jeff Adams, the city's community development director, said that after the City Council requested staff to investigate hotel rental packaging with emerging mobility devices, he did not find any.

He said he included language that clarifies they would not be allowed.

"And that way we do have some language, which is good, if somebody's including those, and we don't want

to see those as included as part of a rental packaging deal, we could enforce that," Adams said.

Electric scooter companies have been rejected by other cities in the region, as well.

The Astoria City Council unanimously turned down electric scooter company Bird on a possible pilot program last year. The city does not allow electric scooters on the Astoria Riverwalk or on sidewalks.

The Long Beach City Council in Washington state also rejected a trial offer from Bird in April.

MORE INSIDE
Cannon Beach to impose restrictions on psilocybin • A8