

Building owner wouldn't mind if post office moves

The Columbia Press

The man who owns the Warrenton Post Office building says he's tired of dealing with the U.S. Postal Service and wouldn't mind if it found accommodations elsewhere.

"If the Postal Service wants to move, all I can say is 'Go ahead and move.' In fact, I will encourage it," Bernie Bjork wrote in a letter to postal officials, city leaders and U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden and U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici.

"I have no problems telling the Postal Service that I do not want to deal with them anymore. With more and more expenses, responsibilities, and

liability being passed on to us landlords, it really is becoming obvious that there is no more room for bargaining. It becomes very simple for us post office property owners, at least this one. I know that I can rent the building to a restaurant, fish market/brewery, business office, or whatever, with much less risk to me."

Wyden and Bonamici held a rally in Warrenton in support of the post office on Aug. 31. Afterward, they wrote to Postmaster General Louis De-



U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden and U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici, center, organized a rally outside the post office on Aug. 31.

Joy urging postal officials to consider moving out of the cramped 2,000-square-foot

building at Warrenton's four-way stop.

Bjork, a retired commercial fisherman and former Port of Astoria commissioner, said he made a proposal and drew up plans in 2006 to expand the building to 3,500 square feet.

"The response from the Postal Service stated, 'We thank you for providing this proposal, however we see no need at this time for this additional space.' And that has been their policy ever since," Bjork said.

Last month, however, a postal official wrote to the politicians to say "a new study has been undertaken to review the current situation."

If the study deems the current location insufficient, a move would be considered.

Is Bjork still willing to expand the building? "No. I'm 67 years old," he said Wednesday. "It's an entirely different story right now. I would rather have somebody else there."

A lease with the postal service today looks very different from those of yesteryear, Bjork said.

When the lease last was renegotiated in 2018, He was forced to pay \$7,000 to a Portland brokerage firm of the Postal Service's choosing, he said. The paperwork for the five-year leases has grown from 13 pages to dozens of pages.

About eight years ago, the post office stopped doing any maintenance and there was no explanation, he said. He commended local resident Trudy Enke, who volunteered to maintain the landscaping after it became an eyesore.

The current lease runs through November 2024.

Water line: City calls for bids on \$2.6 million project

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down later this year to build. ... Long story short, pipe's kind of hard to come by and what is available is really expensive."

Commissioner Rick Newton missed the meeting due to a late flight home from Alaska. The four other commissioners voted in favor of calling for bids.

The plan is for bids to be opened in December and the award made shortly thereafter. Construction would take about six months.

In other business,

- Commissioners awarded an \$85,750 contract to North Pacific Excavation of Warrenton to rebuild and improve the pump station and pressurized wastewater main at Marlin Avenue and Highway 101. Work would begin immediately and take about 20 days.

- Approved a request from Fort Stevens VFW and Auxiliary to prepare and serve a community Thanksgiving dinner at Warrenton Community Center. The group would be required to adhere to all restrictions imposed by the county Public Health De-



partment, which could limit the dinner to curbside pickup and deliveries only. The \$862 rental fee will be paid by the city.

- Discussed imposing a

leash law everywhere in the city except ocean beaches. The city's current laws allow dogs off leash if their owners are able to control them by voice command.




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County receives speedier virus tests

Health officials now can get nearly instantaneous results from COVID-19 tests.

Clatsop County Public Health Department received 1,000 BinaxNOW test kits on Wednesday from Oregon Health Authority.

The portable test kits – approved for use in August by the federal Food and Drug Administration – require no laboratory processing and can

produce results in as little as 15 minutes.

The county's other kits had to be sent to a lab and took two to seven days or longer to process, Public Health Director Mike McNickle said.

The tests are available through the drive-through testing program offered Mondays and Wednesdays. To arrange a test, call 503-325-8500.

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