

## Business and development tidbits



Cindy Yingst/The Columbia Press

The Port of Astoria's Pier One building is filling up with tenants.

## Port to sell itself with new plan

A marketing plan, aimed at informing the public and improving the Port of Astoria's image, was introduced to port commissioners at a workshop this month.

The goal is to cultivate new relationships with boat owners, aircraft owners and business owners as well as improve relations with current vendors, partners and affiliates, said Melanie Wiegardt, staff accountant.

"It's to tell the port's story in our own words," Wiegardt said.

Port staff members already are updating the website with biographies of port commissioners and photos of employees. And the port will begin publishing a quarterly newsletter for tenants in March. A social media campaign introducing Executive Director Will Isom and Deputy Director Matt McGrath comes next.

The port's reputation has taken several hits over the years due to commission in-fighting, legal problems, and troubled relationships stemming from the actions of former executive directors.

### COUNTY PUBLIC WORKS

A Portland company will help the county with its efforts to relocate the public works facility, which currently is within the tsunami unin-

dation zone.

On Wednesday, county commissioners hired Mackenzie, a land-use planning, engineering and architectural firm, to conduct a facility needs assessment that will help in choosing a site for public works.

Twelve sites have been identified as potential relocation sites. They include properties on Highway 101 Business, Loukas Lane, Farm Lane, Walluski Loop, two on Fort Clatsop Road, and two on Lewis and Clark Road.

Also in the running is a portion of the Fort Pointe property in Warrenton, a site on Dolphin Avenue near the new middle school, and a parcel on 19th Street in the North Coast Business Park.

The \$67,400 contract with Mackenzie has a completion date of April 28.

### SUNSET LAKE BRIDGE

County commissioners approved a \$187,505 contract with Oregon State Bridge Construction of Stayton to repair the failing wood components of the Sunset Lake Bridge, south of Warrenton.

The bridge is restricted to lighter vehicles only until repairs are made.

The county received four bids, with the Stayton company's bid \$60,000 lower than the next lowest bidder.

# Utility bill penalty suspensions to end

## City leaders struggle to ensure pandemic restriction fairness

The city of Warrenton will reinstate shut-offs and penalties on those who fail to pay utility bills beginning next month.

When the COVID-19 national emergency was declared last March, the city temporarily suspended late fees, penalties and water service disconnections for nonpayment of past due balances.

The suspension ends Sunday, Jan. 31, and normal billing processes begin for all utility customers. Past due accounts are scheduled for shut off on Feb. 23.

"There are 200 past-due accounts that would be considered for shut-off," City Manager Linda Engbretson said during Tuesday City Commission meeting. "We generally have under 20."

Those who are still struggling because of the pandemic will not be shut off if they'll contact the city to work out a payment plan, she said.

The city has placed door hangers at homes and added warnings to customer's utility bills, she said. Yet only a dozen or so people have contacted the city to set up payment plans.

"I don't want it to become a big ugly mess, but on Feb. 23, we'll begin shutting people off. There's no reason for turning people off with this opportunity."

City Commissioner Mark Baldwin acknowledged the struggle and rules from the state that have hurt those in the service industry.

"To be direct, the shell game the state government is still playing with the COVID is disconcerting to people," Baldwin said. "They give it to us. They take it away. They give it to

### Utility bill help

To set up a utility payment plan with the city, call 503-861-2233.

us. They take it away. Waitresses feel like they're on a yo-yo."

Mayor Henry Balensifer, along with the mayors of Astoria and Seaside, asked the state for data to justify the closure of restaurants, a huge portion of the economy on the North Oregon Coast. No response was received, he said, although the private League of Oregon Cities reported restaurants accounted for 4.7 percent of infections during November and December.

In a Jan. 25 update to constituents posted on his Facebook page, Balensifer criticized the state's response.

"Obviously, that's not exactly a number that justifies a



Mayor Henry Balensifer

full closure compared to other industries that are running to different capacities," Balensifer said.

He intends to continue pressing the state for more transparency and a rationale for the decisions made.

"Help the public understand why it is we're doing what we're doing. We need to see the data," he said. "There's a growing number of elected officials who will be jumping on the bandwagon ... because the public demands and the public needs and the public has a right to the information related to these types of things."

## Good journalism matters. Now more than ever.

Stay smart.

Read the paper

A 1-year subscription by mail is just \$26 by mail to Clatsop County residents

A 1-year subscription to addresses outside Clatsop County by mail is just \$35.

A 1-year online subscription is just \$22!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ In-County ☐ Out-of-County ☐ Online Subscription

THE COLUMBIA PRESS

Clatsop County's Independent Weekly Newspaper

Send payment to: 5 N. Hwy. 101, #500, Warrenton, OR 97146  
or pay online at <https://thecolumbiapress.com/?m=subscribe>