

County pauses comp plan work

Clatsop County officials have taken a pause in making updates to the county's Comprehensive Plan in order to reassess the project's schedule and process.

The Comprehensive Plan provides a blueprint for how land in the county is used and sets policies that guide county actions regarding land use, recreational amenities, transportation, farm and forest lands, natural resources, and housing.

The update, launched in 2019, is the first complete update of the county's Comprehensive Plan since its adoption in 1979.

The pause will allow county staff to identify ways to make the project run smoother and ensure the final product reflects the board's priorities and complies with state rules.

Six citizen advisory committees representing the county's land-use planning areas and a countywide panel have held regular meetings as part of the update process.

No date has been set for resuming the meetings.

Project to bring back cherished section of historic highway

A project to reconnect the western and eastern segments of the Historic Columbia River Highway State Trail broke ground this week.

The Mitchell Point Tunnel, a passage built in 1915 for cars traveling the historic highway, has been closed for seven decades. The project will create a new tunnel for walkers and bikers, which will be 655 feet long with five arched windows reminiscent of the original design. The work will be completed in 2023.

"Our team is starting work on one of the most highly anticipated projects on the Historic Columbia River Highway State Trail," Oregon Department of Transportation's website boasts.

The Mitchell Point Tunnel was between Cascade Locks and Hood River. It was once the highlight of the old highway. Yet its only trace is in aging sepia-toned photographs.

It opened in 1915, aligned near the 19th century wagon road. The real attraction, though, wasn't the history but the presence of windows



Mitchell Point Tunnel had five arched windows facing the river.

providing glimpses of the Columbia River.

By 1953, the tunnel was too narrow and too hazardous for modern transportation so ODOT closed it and, 13 years later, destroyed it to make way for the interstate highway adjacent to the river.

Times have changed. In 1986, Congress created the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act and that motivated the Oregon Legislature to commit to re-

storing the old highway to the glory days of the 1920s.

ODOT and several partners, including the U.S. Forest Service, Oregon Parks and Recreation, Friends of the Historic Columbia River Highway, Western Federal Lands, Travel Oregon and others, are restoring all 73 miles of the historic highway, from Troutdale to The Dalles. Some segments are accessible to cars and cyclists. Some segments, known as the His-

toric Highway State Trail, are accessible only by people walking, rolling or biking. That includes the new Mitchell Point Tunnel.

"This is going to be a gem for Oregonians as well as people from all over the world," said Kevin Gorman, chairman of Friends of the Columbia Gorge. "All I can say is let's start digging."

Congressman Earl Blumenauer called it "a key piece to all 73 miles of the historic highway."

Retired Oregon Parks and Recreation Manager Kevin Price plans to ride the entire length, in segments, on his bike.

"The initial goal was that an individual could get on a bike in Troutdale and ride all the way to The Dalles without having to utilize I-84," Price said.

The tunnel is one of three trail segments yet to be connected. To the west, another trail segment should begin construction in 2022, which leaves just one 1.6-mile segment remaining.

Oregon man faces charges in Capitol breach

An Oregon man was arrested for crimes related to the Jan. 6 breach of the U.S. Capitol, which disrupted a joint session of Congress in the process of ascertaining and counting the electoral votes related to the presidential election.

Reed Knox Christensen, 62, of Hillsboro, is charged with federal offenses that include forcibly assaulting, resisting, impeding or interfering with law enforcement; engaging in an act of physical violence in a capitol building; and entering or remaining on restricted grounds without lawful authority. Christensen made his initial court appearance April 26.

Christensen was on the Lower West Terrace of the Capitol grounds where Capitol Police were protecting the building from rioters, according to court documents.



Christensen

Surveillance and body camera footage shows him striking and pushing officers and initiating the aggressive removal of metal bike rack barriers.

At 2:20 p.m., Christensen allegedly tried to breach the barrier when a Metropolitan Police officer sprayed him with a chemical irritant. Despite the spray to his face, the man charged through the perimeter, away from officers, and struck a Capitol Police officer with his fists.

The FBI's Washington field office had listed Christensen as No. 191 on their "seeking information" photos.

In the first 100 days after the breach, more than 400 individuals were charged, a fourth of them for assaulting or impeding law enforcement.

Mysterious object in road raises concerns

Someone tossed a smoking object onto Marine Drive near the Portway Tavern on Tuesday morning, and it caused quite a stir until a bomb squad could figure out what it was, according to Astoria Police.

A police officer was in the 400 block of West Marine Drive about 9 a.m. when someone in a residence threw a smoking metallic device into the center of one of the eastbound lanes.

The object was metal, charred, and bulging, "signs that it needed to be treated with caution," Deputy Chief Eric Halverson said.

They called the Oregon State

Police and, after a phone consultation, OSP decided the agency's bomb squad should respond, X-ray and recover the object.

Meanwhile police spoke with those in the house from which the object appeared to have been thrown and all of them denied knowing what it was or who had thrown it.

The bomb squad removed the object from the road about noon and examined it in a safe location.

"After it had been opened, model numbers and its construction suggested that it was a lithium laptop battery that had undergone a reaction," according to police.