

City refocuses on nuisance properties

BY CINDY YINGST
The Columbia Press

Warrenton will again turn its attention to nuisance properties following a hiatus forced by COVID-19 and repeated staff changes in the city's Building and Planning Department.

A drive to clean up eyesores and unsafe structures was initiated several years ago by Brenda and Norm Hoxsey, founders of the grassroots volunteer group Spruce Up Warrenton.

On Tuesday, Norm Hoxsey brought a list of properties and photos to the City Commission meeting and asked leaders to refocus on problem properties.

"Here are pictures of properties I'm sure the majority of you are aware of," Hoxsey said.

Properties Spruce Up is watching are primarily on the town's main thoroughfares, as Spruce Up's mission is to revitalize downtown Warrenton and downtown Hammond.

Commissioners each brought up their own list of eyesores.

City Manager Linda Engbretson asked for direction on the most problematic properties since the enforcement process is time-consuming and must follow proper legal channels.

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The Vitko building on South Main Avenue hasn't been in use since the '60s. (Clatsop Association of Realtors) **Right:** The Post Office, an old store and an old house in downtown Hammond are surrounded by storage boxes. (Cindy Yingst)



Food court work continues despite setback

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Potential problems generating electrical power have sparked concerns about the progress of the downtown food court project.

The city's Urban Renewal Agency would need to pay for a new transformer if more than eight mobile food coaches are allowed, Public Works Director Collin Stelzig told city commissioners, who were serving in the role of the agency's directors.



Stelzig

"Public Works has so far received one estimate to complete the electrical portion of the food cart pod design," he said in his report. "The estimate was substantially higher than the estimate provided by the landscape architect, which was \$8,000."

The food court is one of three current projects being funded by Warrenton's Urban Renewal Agency. The agency is funded by tax money gathered within the urban renewal district, which includes all of downtown and Warrenton Marina; all money must be spent improving areas within the district.

The district's first 10 years mostly were spent making improvements to the marina. The city has until 2028 to finish improvements before the money runs out.

In addition to the food court, the Urban Renewal Agency's top projects include placing utility poles underground throughout downtown and fixing Southwest Fourth Street as the entryway to Warrenton's Robinson Community Park.

Improvements to downtown and Fourth Street are estimated at \$6.5 million, with at least \$4.5 million re-

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State issues beach health warning

A public health advisory was issued Tuesday for unsafe levels of fecal bacteria in ocean waters in Cannon Beach and Tolovana State Park.

Visitors should avoid direct contact with the water until the advisory is lifted, Oregon Health Authority said.

Unsafe levels of fecal bacteria can cause diarrhea, stomach cramps, skin rashes, upper respiratory infections, and other illnesses. Children, the elderly and those with compromised immune systems should use extra caution.

Razor clamming reopens today in county

Razor clam harvesting reopens in Clatsop County on Friday, Oct. 1, after a closure due to high levels of the biotoxin domoic acid.

The opening was announced by the Oregon Department of Agriculture and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Razor clamming already had been open from Tillamook Head (south of Seaside) to the California border.

Recent shellfish samples taken from the area indicate levels of

domoic acid have fallen below the alert level.

Mussel, bay clam, and crab harvesting remains open along the entire Oregon coast. Coastal scallops are not affected by biotoxin closures when only the adductor muscle is eaten.

Paralytic shellfish toxin and domoic acid toxin are produced by algae and originate in the ocean.

For more information, call ODA's shellfish biotoxin hotline at 800-448-2474.