

# County jail bond referred to November ballot

## Jail would be relocated to Warrenton

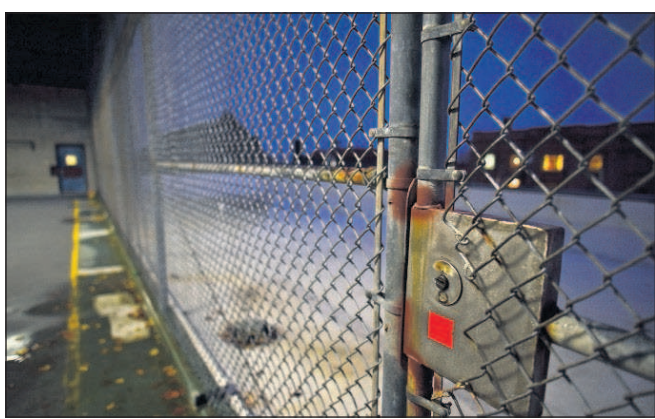
By Jack Heffernan  
The Daily Astorian

Voters will decide in November whether the Clatsop County Jail will be relocated to Warrenton at a \$23.8 million price tag.

The Clatsop County Board of Commissioners voted unanimously Wednesday, March 14 — with Commissioners Lianne Thompson and Lisa Clement absent — to refer the plan to the general election ballot.

If the bond is approved, it would relocate the jail from Duane Street in Astoria to the now-closed North Coast Youth Correctional Facility. Jail capacity would rise from 60 inmates to 148 with room for future expansion.

“We’ve studied this for months, for years,” said Scott



COLIN MURPHEY/THE DAILY ASTORIAN

The current Clatsop County jail in Astoria includes a secure recreation area on the roof of the building.

Lee, the board’s chairman. “This is a great proposal, and I think the citizens will have the final say.”

After commissioners approved a \$51,000 feasibility study last May, DLR Group — an architecture firm that led the project to relocate the Sheriff’s Office in 2016 — presented two proposals. One design included room for 140 inmates for \$12 million, while

the other involved 200 for \$28 million.

The county then asked the architects to create new designs that closed the price gap before settling on the current version. Money has been set aside to cover \$2 million to \$3 million of the cost, County Manager Cameron Moore said.

George McCartin, a county commission candidate in May’s primary election, asked

commissioners Wednesday to reconsider the \$12 million plan. He referred to two previous bond measures to improve the jail — including a \$14 million bond in 2012 — that have failed.

If passed, the bond measure would require \$150,000 more per year in operating costs, according to architects. By comparison, operations for the \$12 million design would cost 300 percent to 400 percent more annually.

“It’s \$12 million to construct, but it is terribly expensive to operate,” Moore said.

Other commenters at the meeting included current and former law enforcement officials, Port of Astoria Commissioner Jim Campbell and mental health advocate Richard Elfering, who has proposed transforming the former youth facility into a mental health treatment center. All but Elfering asked commissioners to put the bond on the ballot.

Campbell referred to the

fact that inmates are released from the jail each week due to overcrowding. Many come from out of the area.

“People know that come to Clatsop County that they can be turned loose within 24 hours because there isn’t room to house them,” Campbell said.

Commissioner Kathleen Sullivan said she was concerned about how the county would adequately pay for mental health treatment with a larger number of inmates staying in the jail for a longer period of time.

Sheriff Tom Bergin said the added time in jail would offer inmates more access to mental health professionals who otherwise would not reach them before their release. The design also includes potential for more safe rooms for those who experience mental health crises.

“When you have a jail that has the ability to have the right capacity, then we get people

stabilized quicker,” Bergin said. “Instead of the revolving door, we can get them to help quicker.”

Sullivan also said she was concerned about the timing of the bond. School districts have discussed placing two bonds on the same ballot — including a \$32.4 million measure in Warrenton-Hammond.

“I guess my statement to you would be, ‘Then let the voters decide that,’” Bergin said.

By the end of the discussion, Sullivan did just that.

“I still have some concerns, but I will defer to the voters of Clatsop County,” she said.

Once the vote was completed, commissioners urged Bergin to promote the bond measure aggressively.

“It’s your decision to put this one on the ballot,” Bergin said. “Now let me go out and talk to the people and explain to them all the importance of a jail.”

# Pet disaster team hopes to aid in calamities

Dogs from Page 1A

“It turns out the answer was ‘yes,’” Kroll said.

The group will join a growing trend of animal preparedness in Oregon, but is a first for Clatsop County.

“A lot will be about education, like how we tell people to prepare with a go-bag — it’s the same kind of thing for your pet,” Kroll said. “You want to pack some food and water, prescriptions, things that would help identify your pet if you got separated, leash and collar, things like that. Prepare your pets like you would prepare yourself.”

## Package deal

While protecting animals has always been a priority for most pet owners, prioritizing animal emergency preparedness has only emerged as a local and state government responsibility in the past 10 years, said Ryan Scholz, the district veterinarian and emergency management liaison for the Oregon Department of Agriculture.

The state began to recognize its importance after Hurricane Katrina in 2005, when insufficient shelter options made residents choose between leaving their pets behind or staying with them in danger. Many chose to stay, resulting in several deaths, Scholz said.

“There was a realization during that event that humans will put their life in jeopardy to save their pet. The two go hand in hand — you can’t address human needs without addressing the needs of their animals,” he said. “What we’ve seen is the corporate realization of this issue, with more community groups growing organically out of this realization.”

Since then, Scholz and his team provide resources and guidance to counties and communities on best practices



EO MEDIA GROUP

Bob Kroll, who is helping launch the Disaster Animal Response Team, plays with his dog, Betty, at his Cannon Beach home.

for transporting supplies, sheltering and caring for livestock and pets in emergency situations from wildfires to tsunamis.

“You are going to get an organic, local response anytime animals are involved with danger,” Scholz said. “So it’s important that organic response has a structure.”

Similar animal response groups in Multnomah and Curry counties were put to the test last summer, Scholz said, when the Eagle Creek and Chetco Bar fires scorched thousands of acres of land and threatened hundreds of livestock.

“During Eagle Creek many were able to transport their own animals, or if they needed help, they had local community members with trucks and trailers organized to help with that assistance. Through the local disaster response group, there was a shelter at the fairgrounds. There was even a litter of piglets born,” Scholz said. “Without structure, people will come in and

show up and take animals to save them, which can make things more difficult. But in Multnomah County they had a list of volunteers with credentials able to evacuate small farms and houses in less than 12 hours. They did heroic work.”

The state is still a ways from being fully prepared. The biggest roadblock to progress, like many other facets of emergency preparedness, is finding the funding to support programs and a vol-

unteer trained in animal medicine to lead it, Scholz said.

But organizing response groups on a community-by-community basis is about as effective as preparedness gets, Scholz said.

“I’d love to see every county and city in the state do what Cannon Beach is doing,” he said. “It’s not the state doing it. It’s the local community groups that are doing this work.”

## What’s next

The first step will be recruiting volunteers with animal handling experience, from anyone as specialized as a vet tech or dog groomer to a long-term pet owner.

“For the moment, the organization is kind of me,” Kroll said. “I’d like this to be a team approach. I’d like other people to share in the efforts and also share in the vision in what this organization will be.”

More information will be available at the Coastal Community Fair on May 12 at the Chamber of Commerce. Anyone interested is invited to attend the group’s first official meeting at 6 p.m., May 24 at the Chamber of Commerce.

“It’s really become apparent a response that includes four-legged family needs to be a part of the response to make it go as smoothly and safely as possible,” he said.

## ‘Whale Watching Spoken Here’

Gray whales are migrating north past the Oregon coast and the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department invites visitors to share the excitement during Spring Whale Watch Week March 24 to March 31. Trained volunteers from the Whale Watching Spoken Here program will be stationed 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. each day at 24 sites along the coast, ready to help people spot the migrating marine mammals.



TRAVEL OREGON

Whale watching takes place at sites along the coast.

The Whale Watching Center in Depoe Bay will be open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily. Visitors to the center can enjoy interactive whale exhibits and take in the panoramic ocean views. Binoculars are provided. Rangers will also be on hand to answer questions about the whales. A live stream of whale activity

off of Depoe Bay returns; watch it on the Oregon State Parks YouTube channel. <https://www.youtube.com/user/OregonParks>

A map of the 24 volunteer whale watch sites can be found on [whalespoken.org](http://whalespoken.org). Visit [oregonstateparks.org](http://oregonstateparks.org) for information about coast parks and campgrounds.

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