

# Knight says port is in 'dire straits'

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The last financial statement the port issued was June 30, 2013, he said. "You can imagine how difficult it is to make a decision" about anything the port does without knowing how much money it has, Knight said.

He said he had understood that several years ago the port had \$1 million in a reserve account, but he's not sure where the money went.

The port commission will hire an accounting firm to perform an audit for the 2013-14 year and for the next two years. A financial consulting firm also will be hired to prepare the port for the audits, Knight said.

Knight, who was bombarded when he first arrived by callers seeking money for overdue bills, fired the former financial manager and hired Jim Grey, former controller at the Columbia Maritime Museum.

"There's nothing more important to me and the organization than to get the finances under control," he said.

By February, the commission — and the public — will have a better idea of the port's financial status, Knight added. "We're getting very, very close," he said.

Despite its problems, however, Knight said he had "never seen an organization with so much potential or facilities that had so much potential."

However, he joked, some of the facilities are in such bad shape that "perhaps the wisest thing we could do is to

move the whole port here to Seaside."

At that suggestion, the audience agreed and applauded.

"We are going to make things right with the customers, tenants and the community," Knight promised.

The port's mission is to be "constantly improving," he said.

"You're going to be proud the port is part of the community. It will be a stellar example of how a port can work with the community to help the port and to help you," he added.

More than 1,000 people are employed in family-wage jobs because of the port, Knight said.

South County could benefit through a "symbiotic relationship" with cruise lines that, he said, are increasing the number of ships coming to Astoria.

"There is a conversation about trying to coordinate the movement of tourists from China to Astoria and to Cannon Beach and Seaside," Knight said. "There's a potential explosion of even more tourists coming to the area."

The port must expend some energy to improve its capacity for more ships and upgrade the airport, he added.

When asked what he thought about the proposal to have the governor appoint commissioners to the port's board, Knight was ambivalent.

"It doesn't matter to me where the commissioners come from," he said. "The work the staff has to do is the same."

# Nofield appointed to Seaside school board

By Nancy McCarthy  
The Seaside Signal

Cannon Beach resident Patrick Nofield was appointed to the Seaside School Board Tuesday night.

Nofield, co-owner and president of Escape Lodging, will fill the vacancy created by Nancy Hauger, who resigned from the board last month. A board member for 11 years, Hauger plans to move to Seattle to be closer to her grandchildren.

Her term ends June 30, 2015.

Nofield has served on several local and state boards, including the Oregon Tourism Commission, where he served as chairman. He also has been involved in the effort to establish a charter school in Cannon Beach.

In other business Tuesday night, the school board heard a report from Dan Gaffney on Clatsop County's first Early Childhood Health and Education Clinic.

Gaffney, who retired as principal from Seaside Heights Elementary School last year, is involved in the county's campaign to prepare children from pre-

school through third grade for school.

Gaffney said the clinic, held last May at the county fairgrounds and at the Seaside Civic and Convention Center, examined 134 children. Screenings included height and weight, blood pressure and temperature, developmental skills, vision, hearing, speech, dental, behavior, nutrition and immunizations.

Follow-up exams or re-screenings were suggested for:

- medical exam: 14 percent of the children
- hearing: 22 percent
- speech: 25 percent
- vision: 59 percent.

Gaffney said the vision test results might be high because age-appropriate examination tools weren't used and some children may have found it difficult to cooperate with the exam. About 54 percent of the participating parents had a doctor or another primary caregiver.

Parents told Gaffney they would like to see the clinics continue. Another is planned early this year, he told the board.

# Neawanna by the Sea under new management

## Problematic inspections lead facility to hire new management company

By Erick Bengel  
EO Media Group

Neawanna by the Sea, a retirement and assisted living facility in Seaside, is trying to improve its operation after an unfavorable 2014.

Following a September inspection by the state Office of Licensing and Regulatory Oversight that revealed some deficiencies, the office restricted Neawanna's ability to admit new residents because of its ongoing failure to be in compliance with the Oregon administrative rules for residential care and assisted living facilities.

It was the third state inspection in 2014 — following others in February and July — to show a lack of "substantive compliance" on Neawanna's part.

"Because things were not heading in the right direction, (the restriction) is an effort to say, 'You need to circle the wagons and not bring new people into the community and focus on getting your service back into compliance,'" said Cory Oace, manager of the community-based care licensing unit that oversees Neawanna.

These deficiencies are not all that unusual, though, Oace said.

Though Neawanna may lose its license if its lingering deficiencies are unresolved by the next unannounced inspection, the business is in no greater danger of losing its license than many of the nearly 500 community care facilities in Oregon.

"They're all at risk of losing their license at any time," Oace said. "We have not made any decision to — or expressed any attempt to — remove (Neawanna's) license to operate."

Such a decision would depend on the severity of the deficiency, Oace said. All of the deficiencies noted in the 2014 surveys were documented as isolated incidents, and very few were determined to have actually caused harm to a resident.

In response to the September findings, however, Neawanna hired the Portland-based Frontier Management shortly thereafter as its new management company, replacing Westmont Living, based in La Jolla, Calif.

Frontier was "asked to step in and help move Neawanna forward," said a Frontier employee who wished to remain anonymous.

The "drastic" change "shows a good faith effort on the part of the provider to come into compliance," Oace



ERICK BENDEL PHOTO

Neawanna by the Sea, on North Wahanna Road in Seaside, underwent three inspections by state officials in 2014. A new management company recently took over the facility.

said. "We're encouraged and hope that they're headed in the right direction."

## Complaints and allegations

The deficiencies recorded in Neawanna's inspections appear to be small-scale lapses largely relating to how the facility tracks its patients' conditions and administers their medications.

But they reflect the general allegations of seven of Neawanna's ex-employees who claim, in sworn affidavits with the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries, that they witnessed Neawanna occasionally mistreating its residents.

Neawanna, along with Westmont Living, remains embroiled in a U.S. District Court case against its former employees, who allege in a civil suit that the business engaged in wage theft; discriminated against its workers based on age, race and sex; and may have unlawfully terminated them for blowing the whistle on its practices.

In 2014, state Adult Protective Services investigated six separate complaints against Neawanna while the facility was under Westmont Living's management.

Three of the complaints were deemed unsubstantiated; that is, no wrongdoing appears to have occurred.

One of the substantiated complaints — a failure to administer ordered medication — resulted in exposing a resident to potential harm. Another — a failure to follow a care plan — prevented a resident from receiving needed lotion on a sore.

And the sixth — a failure to provide

a resident with prescribed narcotic medications when the resident moved to another facility — had caused the resident unreasonable discomfort for several days. "This failure is a violation of resident rights, is considered neglect of care and constitutes abuse," according to the findings.

However, that number of complaints is "not uncommon," Oace said, which "is not to say that the goal isn't zero." "We have lots of facilities that have more, we have lots that have less."

The plaintiffs in the civil suit — Wesley Cordova, a former cook; Elodia Gonzalez, a former caregiver; Lynzee Johnson, a former medical technician; Kylee Lunsford, a former medical technician; Amy Patterson, a former medical technician; Matthew Perry, a former dishwasher; and Michelealyn Schroeder, a former resident services director — also claim in their affidavits that Neawanna ignored unsanitary conditions, created a hostile work environment and allowed sexual harassment to occur.

They have retained lawyer Michael Ross, of Slater Ross Attorneys in Portland. Slater is handling the plaintiffs' allegations as a single claim against Neawanna and Westmont Living. David Silke, of the Seattle-based Gordon & Rees LLP, represents the defendants.

The seven are still seeking economic damages, liquidated damages, noneconomic damages of \$100,000 per plaintiff, equitable relief, pre- and post-judgment interest and costs, disbursements and attorney fees.

Attempts by the *Signal* to reach Westmont Living were unsuccessful.

# SEASIDE Signal

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