



LOCAL RACES AND BALLOT MEASURES

Voters say 'not now' to expansion plan

Bond for aquatic facility expansion

By R.J. Marx
Seaside Signal

Sunset Park and Recreation District voters gave thumbs down to a \$20 million bond to expand recreation facilities. About two-thirds of the electorate opposed the measure to fund the expansion of the aquatic facility and provide indoor recreation space at the Sunset Pool, opened in 1977.

The ballot measure called for construction of a recreation center featuring an



Rendering of the proposed aquatic center expansion.

indoor gym space, indoor walking track, group fitness, weight room and cardiovascular rooms, with added

parking, site improvements and additional changing areas.

The funds would have ex-

SUNSET EMPIRE PARK AND RECREATION DISTRICT

panded preschool and youth program space, group fitness space, indoor walking track and gymnasium space to

improve overall community health. The estimated tax rate for the bonds was estimated at 70 cents per \$1,000 property value, or \$140 annually for a home with an assessed value of \$200,000.

During the course of the campaign, city councilors and members of the public asked for a focus on improvements on the current facility rather than "unnecessary expansion." Residents resisted a new financial obligation so shortly after the passage of a \$99.7 million bond for a new Seaside School District campus in the Southeast Hills, designed to move endangered schools out of the tsunami zone. Others felt the cost was excessive.

On Tuesday night, the district's executive director Skyler Archibald said the organization has strived to meet the needs of residents and guests by providing high-quality recreation programs and facilities.

"While the results of Measure 4-196 are not what we were hoping for, we'll continue to work to meet those needs," Archibald said. "Throughout our process, we have repeatedly heard from our residents of the need for more indoor recreation space to increase community health and wellness. The district will be proactive in seeking out opportunities to provide that space both for the interim and for the perpetual future."

After three tries, voters back a new Clatsop County Jail

A \$20 million bond to expand to Warrenton

By Jack Heffernan
The Daily Astorian

Voters on Election Day approved a \$20 million bond to relocate the overcrowded Clatsop County Jail in Astoria to an expanded facility in Warrenton.

Two previous bond measures, in 2002 and 2012, had failed, but law enforcement saw a rare opportunity to upgrade when the state closed the North Coast Youth Correctional Facility last year.

"Oh, hell yes," Clatsop County Sheriff Tom Bergin said when asked if he had seen the election results moments after they were released.

"I'm very grateful to the people of Clatsop County for realizing this is an absolute necessity for the integrity of the county," he said.

DLR Group, a Portland-based architecture firm, was hired to conduct a \$51,000 feasibility study on converting the former youth facility. The firm presented plans that ranged from a \$12 million option with capacity for 140 inmates to \$28 million with 200 inmates.

Citing relatively inexpensive operating costs, the county commission settled on a design that calls for 148 beds with room for future expansion.

The 38-year-old jail on Duane Street can hold 60 inmates. Several inmates each week are released from the jail while their court cases are ongoing because of overcrowding.

Local law enforcement leaders cited several studies that reveal the need for a new jail. The 2017 Oregon Uni-



COLIN MURPHEY/THE DAILY ASTORIAN

A \$20 million bond will support a new jail at the former North Coast Youth Correctional Facility in Warrenton.

'This bond takes unique advantage of the still 'fresh' bones of the OYA facility, without which the project could have cost the taxpayers double.'

Clatsop County District Attorney Josh Marquis

form Crime Report, for example, ranked the county first in behavioral crimes and crimes against people and fifth in property crimes.

Some, though, questioned how the jail bond would fare, considering that school bonds in Astoria and Warrenton and another measure to expand the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District's fitness and aquatic centers were also on the ballot.

"I was cautiously optimistic, to put it lightly," Bergin said.

Warrenton Mayor Henry Balensifer and the City Commission took no position on the jail bond. The mayor said that while he saw the need for a new jail, he was hesitant to ask residents for more money with the Warrenton-Hammond School District's \$38.5 million bond also on the ballot.

"This bond takes unique advantage of the still 'fresh' bones of the OYA facility, without which the project could have cost the taxpayers double," Clatsop County District Attorney Josh Marquis said in an email. "Yet some, like Warrenton Mayor Henry Balensifer, refused to take a position, like many I guess, hoping that we could just whistle through stats showing the highest violent crime rates reported by the Oregon Criminal Justice System."

The sheriff said the difference in this year's bond measure was that officials had a more established plan that was meant to keep costs down.

"I know we did our due diligence the past two years," he said.

Bergin has said a new jail would offer better mental health treatment options.

While Amy Baker, the executive director of Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare, decried the tendency to fund incarceration over mental health services, she supported the bond. Baker said the current jail is "inhumane" and that a new one could offer more opportunities to provide treatment.

To pay for increased jail operating costs, the county passed a 1 percent lodging tax. Bergin said the tax was fair since a large share of people arrested in the county come from other areas. Local hoteliers, however, vehemently opposed the tax.

Bergin said the next step is for architects and county officials to discuss a timeline for construction in Warrenton.

"I'm sure it'll take a few months to get that all sorted out and move forward," he said.

Mitchell wins state House race

Campaign to replace Boone

By Edward Stratton
The Daily Astorian



Tiffany Mitchell

Tiffany Mitchell kept state House District 32 in Democratic hands on Tuesday, defeating Republican Vineeta Lower to replace the retiring state Rep. Deborah Boone.

"I ran my race the old-fashioned way, on voters' doorsteps, talking to them about the things that most impact their lives," Mitchell said in a release. "Volunteers for my campaign knocked on more than 15,000 doors, and I personally knocked over 7,000. I plan to bring that same neighborly work ethic to Salem to tackle the biggest issues that our community faces."

Mitchell, a state social services worker, scored an upset victory in May in a tight Democratic primary against Tim Josi, a Tillamook County commissioner and former state representative backed by regional industries and incumbents, including Boone, D-Cannon Beach, and state Sen. Betsy Johnson, D-Scappoose. Josi came in third after John Orr, a local attorney and employee of Trails End Recovery.

Lower, a teacher, faced no challengers in the Republican primary. Josi crossed the political aisle after losing in the primary and endorsed Lower, who eventually picked up many of his backers in local industry, along with state Republicans.

"Even though the results tonight weren't what we were hoping for, I will always remain committed to serving our community," Lower said in a statement. "I'd like to congratulate Tiffany on her victory and hope that she will be committed to representing the unique and diverse interests of our district. Lastly, I would like to thank everyone that helped our campaign. I'll always be thankful for their support."

Independent Brian Halvorsen and Libertarian Randall Carlson were a distant

third and fourth.

While Lower's campaign was backed largely by business interests, Mitchell's

support came primarily from labor unions, along with environmental and women's groups. The Service Employees International Union — Mitchell's union — provided her largest donations. Nearly half of her financial support came in the form of in-kind contributions from groups campaigning on her behalf.

Mitchell focused her campaign on popular progressive social issues such as making health care and housing more affordable, while raising taxes on the wealthy and corporations to provide more revenue.

Lower centered her campaign on improving infrastructure and education, but provided few policy specifics.

Boone's decision not to run for re-election after 14 years in office created a competitive campaign for the open seat. The House District 32 race attracted more cash contributions than the \$272,000 combined over the past three election cycles, according to the National Institute on Money in Politics, a nonprofit tracking campaign finance.

Mitchell took in about \$260,000 worth of cash donations as of Tuesday, along with \$240,000 worth of in-kind contributions. Lower gathered \$118,500 in cash to go with \$64,500 worth of in-kind contributions. Josi had gathered more than \$113,000 in cash in the primary, while Orr's campaign took in less than \$20,000.

Neither Halvorsen nor Randall recorded any contributions.

Johnson, meanwhile, sailed to re-election Tuesday against Constitution Party candidate Ray Biggs from Columbia City in state Senate District 16.

Kerry Smith wins; Gearhart OKs pot tax

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When Oregon voters legalized recreational marijuana sales in 2014, the state imposed a 17 percent sales tax and gave cities and counties the option to add an additional 3 percent if approved by voters. The county considered the tax in 2016, but no recreational dispensaries existed outside city limits at the time.

Staff estimates the tax, applied to dispensaries outside city limits, would generate \$50,000 in revenue annually, county staff estimated.

Gearhart pot tax

Gearhart also sought to align itself with Oregon statute as voters considered Measure 4-199, designed to amend the city's taxes on sales of marijuana products.



COLIN MURPHEY/THE DAILY ASTORIAN

A clerk returns a jar of marijuana to a shelf after helping a customer at Sweet Relief in Astoria.

Unofficial results showed more than 70 percent of voters approving the 3 percent tax on the sale of cannabis products.

Gearhart was among a few cities to vote in a tax prior to

the legalization of recreational cannabis. In 2014, shortly before the state's voters approved Measure 91, the city passed an ordinance requiring a 10 percent tax on the sale of recreational marijuana and a 5

percent tax for a medical marijuana registry cardholder.

After legalization, the state established a 17 percent tax on marijuana and limited local taxes to 3 percent. Cities may not tax medical marijuana sales.

With a 10 percent tax already in place, Gearhart city councilors had the option of defending the tax in court or asking voters to approve a 3 percent tax.

The measure would approve the Gearhart ordinance imposing a 3 percent tax on the sale of recreational marijuana in the city by a licensed marijuana retailer. The tax would be collected at the point of sale and remitted by the marijuana retailer. The measure also includes provisions regarding collection, administration and enforcement of the tax.

Mayor, councilors keep their seats

Seaside from Page 1A

Montero, a councilor since 2010, touted council accomplishments during the campaign, and cited the need for continued work on workforce housing, homelessness, city infrastructure, emergency preparedness and quality of life.

Phillips, elected in 2010, said she was proud of opportunities to assist residents when they have had issues

and raised concerns, citing her advocacy for those seeking parking access for people with disabilities.

Wright moved from Gresham to Seaside in 2014. He worked 35 years for an international grain exporter, retiring as chief financial officer in 2013. Wright said he will continue to work with the mayor and other councilors to achieve the goals set by the council in early 2017.