

Local commissioners oppose cap and trade

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

Two Clatsop County commissioners announced their opposition to cap and trade as state Senate Republicans boycotted a floor session in Salem to block a vote on the bill.

Commissioner Mark Kujala wrote a letter to the Joint Committee on Ways and Means on Friday, Feb. 21, urging legislators to oppose cap and trade. Kujala, who represents Warrenton, Hammond and the western portion of Astoria, said the legislation is bad for the county.

“The increased energy costs associated with this legislation will inequitably harm residents and businesses in rural counties throughout the state of Oregon. This legislation will have an imperceptible impact on climate change, but a noticeable effect on our community,” he said.

Kujala, a former Warrenton mayor, was the only county commissioner to speak out against cap and trade last year.

Commissioner Lianne Thompson, who represents most of South County, opposed the bill in a letter Thursday. She described it as a “good effort,” but said it ultimately fails because of its potential unanticipated consequences and divisiveness.



Lianne Thompson

“Clearly we have to do something, and we have to do it together and we have to come to agreement rather than trying to force anybody’s opinion on anybody else. Force doesn’t work. Collaboration does,” Thompson said in an interview.

She believes the bill should be referred to voters. She said there are reasons to be concerned about climate change and that action should be taken on a worldwide basis.

“Because it exacerbates the gulfs that divide us, rural and urban, rich and poor, members of every or no political party, this bill should not go forward. There is the undeniable perception that this is a piece of political warfare, and we shouldn’t go down that road any further than we already have,” Thompson wrote in her letter.

The full commission has not taken a position on cap and trade. Twenty-six of



Mark Kujala

Oregon’s 36 counties have opposed the bill.

Senate Bill 1530, the controversial greenhouse gas emissions legislation, has been a political lightning rod.

Ways and Means voted 13-9 on Monday morning to advance the bill to the Senate floor. State Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, cast a key vote in favor of the bill to offset the “no” vote from Sen. Betsy Johnson, D-Scappoose.

The committee rejected a Republican plan to refer the matter to voters.

Senate Republicans boycotted a floor session, putting a stop to the Senate before it could consider the bill.

The Senate requires 20 senators be present to take votes.

Eighteen Democrats and one Republican, Sen. Tim Knopp, of Bend, were present for the 11 a.m. session. The remaining 11 Repub-

licans disappeared in protest, denying the Senate the needed quorum to act. At least two Republicans would be needed on the floor if all Democrats were there.

Courtney issued a call of the Senate to get any absent Republicans in the Capitol building to come to the floor. Before the floor session began, state troopers roamed the halls of the Capitol.

Courtney then adjourned the floor session until 11 a.m. Tuesday, after an admonishment that policy and budget bills couldn’t get done if senators were absent. Lawmakers are facing a March 8 deadline to close the short session.

He implored his fellow senators to return.

In a statement shortly before the floor session, Sen. Lynn Findley, R-Vale, said that “if my colleagues will not allow for a fair process in the building, then I will represent my constituents from outside the building.”

Kate Gillem, a Senate Republican spokeswoman, said they would stay away for the rest of the session. She said they could maybe be drawn back if the bill could be referred to voters.

She didn’t say where they went.

“I don’t know,” she said. “They’ve been super tight-lipped. Even with staff.”

Claire Withycombe, Jake Thomas and Sam Stites of the Oregon Capital Bureau contributed to this report.

State wrestles with building facilities in tsunami zones

By ANDREW SELSKY
Associated Press

SALEM — Experts say the big one is coming to the Pacific Northwest: a massive earthquake that will cause buildings and bridges to collapse and unleash a tsunami that will devastate the coast.

But, doubling down on its decision last year to allow the construction of critical facilities in tsunami inundation zones, the Oregon Legislature appears headed to approve building standards for those facilities, like police and fire stations. The House Committee on Natural Resources last week approved the measure by a 6-1 vote, sending it to the House floor for a vote.

A leading earthquake expert, and the lone dissenting voter, says lawmakers are making a big mistake.

“I don’t think that we should have ever opened up

tsunami inundation zones to important infrastructure like police, fire stations and so forth. So that’s why I’ll be voting no for the bill,” Rep. Chris Gorsek, a Democrat from the Portland suburb of Troutdale, told the committee.

Most other countries in the world prone to tsunamis have a land-use philosophy in which construction of certain structures are banned depending on their proximity to tsunami inundation zones, said Chris Goldfinger, an Oregon State University professor and an earthquake geologist.

“It’s just probably best not to put things into the tsunami zone at all, no matter how strongly they build them,” Goldfinger said.

Oregon, however, abandoned that approach last year when the Legislature, with hardly any discussion, repealed a ban enacted in 1995 on construction of cer-

tain public facilities in inundation zones.

The American Society of Civil Engineers has decided to recommend allowing buildings in tsunami zones if they’re built to certain standards, Goldfinger noted. The new bill adopts the ASCE standards.

Rep. David Brock Smith, a Republican from the coastal town of Port Orford, tried to convince Gorsek to reconsider his vote by pointing out that there currently are no building standards for critical facilities in the tsunami zone, and that this bill provides them.

The bill’s sponsor, Rep. David Gomberg, a Democrat representing a coastal district, said in an email to voters that “new science, engineering, and architecture are showing us how to construct better and safer.”

Goldfinger, who submitted written testimony opposing the bill, said the ASCE

standard is useful in building a vertical evacuation structure, and is aimed only at keeping a building from being knocked down.

“If you were to build a tsunami-proof, ASCE-coded hospital in a tsunami zone, everybody could well die inside the hospital and the function would be lost, but the steel skeleton would still be there,” he said. “This makes no sense.”

An earthquake in the Cascadia subduction zone, which extends in the ocean off Northern California to Canada’s Vancouver Island, has a 37% probability of happening off Oregon in the next 50 years, with a slightly lower chance of one striking near Washington state, Goldfinger said. Cascadia earthquakes have an average magnitude of around 9, making them among the world’s biggest.

The last time the ocean reared up from a Cascadia earthquake was in 1700.

Alex Van Slyke
of Churchill
Mortgage in
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Rankin, Cody
Parry and Adam
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Seaside Fire
Department, and
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Churchill Mortgage



Churchill Mortgage ‘shares the love’

Seaside Signal

Local Gearhart and Astoria Churchill Mortgage team members organized an event for Valentine’s Day that brought together donations from local vendors and to be distributed to our “local heroes.”

Churchill’s goal was to “Share the Love” with those who keep local communities safe.

By partnering with Safeway, Fred Meyer, and Human Bean, and with their own personal contributions, they were able to bring coffee, donuts, and healthy snacks to the Astoria police and Fire Station, the Warrenton police and fire station, the local sheriff’s department, and the Warrenton Medix station for first responders.

In Seaside, donations from Dundee’s Donuts and Seaside Coffee House

(along with some personally donated snacks and fruit) were brought to the

Seaside Fire Department and the Seaside Police Department.

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Cleanup scheduled at Fishers Point

Seaside Signal

North Coast Land Conservancy partners with Lower Nehalem Community Trust on a Nehalem Bay stewardship day on Wednesday, March 11, from 9 a.m. to noon.

Volunteers will work to remove invasive plants and otherwise spruce up two conserved properties near Wheeler: NCLC’s Fishers Point Habitat Reserve and LNCT’s Zimmerman Marsh. Primary tasks will be removing ivy and

Scotch broom and maintaining native plants, including cutting back blackberry and mulching around plants.

Volunteers are urged to dress for the weather and wear waterproof boots and work gloves. All necessary tools will be provided. Bring drinking water and snacks. There will be no toilets or potable water on site. Dogs are not allowed on NCLC properties.

Contact NCLC’s Amy Hutmacher at 503-738-9126 or amyh@nclctrust.org.

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