

At North Coast Tourism Summit, a focus on sustainability

By **R.J. MARX**
Seaside Signal

The North Coast Destination Management Studio met at McMenamins on Monday, March 9, to bring together local leaders to drive visitor traffic and promote sustainable tourism.

Travel Oregon Vice President Kristin Dahl described “a shift from destination marketing to destination management,” balancing natural resources, industries and business in the communities along the North Coast, from Astoria to Pacific City.

“To come together and bring stakeholders is not new,” Dahl said to the audience at McMenamins in Gearhart. “But what is new is how the network can function and function well.”

In September 2018, Travel Oregon kicked off by providing what it describes as an overview of the tourism industry, trends and sustainable tourism best practices to stimulate new thinking about the destination.

Dahl sees the role of the tourism studio to collaborate with people at the local level.

“One of the critical changes is listening to the local bodies, listening to resident perspectives, listening to local businesses and jurisdictions and government agencies doing the work on the ground,” Dahl said. “It takes a lot for those stakeholders to come together, listen to what those priorities are, listen to what those opportunities are to engage



R.J. Marx
The North Coast Tourism Summit held at McMenamins on Monday, March 9. From left, McAndrew Burns, Steve Wright, Kevin Leahy and Jessica Newhall.



Kristen Dahl, Travel Oregon's vice president for destination development at the North Coast Tourism Summit on March 9.

in those things, which are fairly complex.”

Seaside visitor information specialist Ken Heman, with city councilor Tita Montero, a member of the advocacy management team since the group’s inception,

said the idea behind the tourism management network is to raise awareness to locals of efforts being made

State Rep. Tiffany Mitchell won’t seek reelection

By **EDWARD STRATTON**
The Astorian

State Rep. Tiffany Mitchell, who was elected in an upset in 2018 and survived a recall drive last year, will not run for reelection.

The Astoria Democrat represents state House District 32 covering Clatsop and Tillamook counties, along with a small portion of Washington County. Her public announcement came hours before the Tuesday filing deadline for the May primary.

Debbie Boothe-Schmidt, a trial assistant for Clatsop County and a board member with the Sunset Empire Transportation District, will seek the Democratic nomination to replace Mitchell.

George Kiepke, a former Clatsop County commissioner who lives in Astoria, also filed in the Democratic primary.

Mitchell moved from Utah to Clatsop County in 2015 with her husband, Mitch, who works for Pacific Power.

“My husband Mitch has accepted an exciting job offer that will take us to Washington state in the coming year,” Mitchell said in a news release. “Since this job became a possibility, we looked at all the alternatives that would allow me to continue serving the people of the North Coast. But we have concluded that none are practical or appropriate past 2020. I will be able to serve out my term, but not beyond that.”

Mitchell, who worked for state Department of Human Services, scored an upset victory in the 2018 primary over Tim Josi, a former state representative and Tillamook County commissioner. Josi was backed by regional industries and political incumbents, including Mitchell’s predecessor, former state Rep. Deborah Boorne of Cannon Beach. After losing, Josi crossed the political aisle and endorsed Mitchell’s Republican opponent, Vineeta Lower.

“While this is a very positive prospect for our family, I am saddened that it cannot include continuing to serve as state representative,” Mitchell said. “This

has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. Not only has it given me the opportunity to work on behalf of my neighbors and community, it enabled me to be a part of making unprecedented progress for North Coast working families and all Oregonians.”

Mitchell has taken several significant and controversial votes as a freshman lawmaker. She supported legislation to create one of the country’s first carbon cap-and-trade systems, leading to a backlash from regional businesses and a failed recall effort led by rural political action group #TimberUnity.

Mitchell also voted to reform the Public Employees Retirement System, angering many of the union members who helped propel her candidacy.

She also supported the Student Success Act, which created a corporate activity tax on larger businesses to support education funding; paid family and medical leave for workers; and protections for housing tenants. She said the policies are just a few of the ways legislators helped Oregonians toward a better future.

“I am deeply grateful to my neighbors for giving me their votes, their trust and this wonderful opportunity to make Oregon a better place,” Mitchell said.

Two Democrats enter race

Boothe-Schmidt, 64, has worked for more than two decades with Clatsop County, most recently as a trial assistant with the district attorney’s office, and is a co-owner of Phog Bounders Antique Mall in Astoria. She defeated incumbent Lylla Gaebel last year for a seat on the board of Sunset Empire. She was formerly president of the local American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees union.

“I’ve been serving this community for over 20 years, so I couldn’t be more excited to take this next step to serve House District 32 as our next state representative,” Boothe-Schmidt, who lives in Warrenton, said in a news release. “Times have changed since I moved to



R.J. Marx
Tiffany Mitchell addresses a town hall in the Seaside Library last July.

the North Coast in the 1990s, but we still value so many of the same things: strong public education, standing up for good-paying local jobs, and ensuring everybody in our community has affordable health care and a safe place to call home.”

FuturePAC, the campaign arm of House Democrats, announced Boothe-Schmidt’s campaign.

Kiepke, 67, said he received a text message from a friend in Salem about Mitchell’s decision before jumping into the race. He is a former commercial fisherman and employee at Georgia-Pacific’s Wauna Mill who resigned from the county commission in 2002 before moving to Utah for a maintenance superintendent position at a forest products company. He was a maintenance supervisor for the state of Utah before moving back to Clatsop County in 2018.

“I’d been asked by quite a few professionals to enter my name in the race,” Kiepke said.

“Jobs and the environment are really high on my priority list,” he said. “I think we can create a balance and make quite a bit of improvement.”

Two Republicans compete

In the Republican primary, Tillamook Mayor Suzanne Weber will face off against Lower, an educator from Seaside. Weber recently received an endorsement from #TimberUnity, which pointed to Weber as the most experienced and connected to natural resource industries like logging, farming, fishing and mining.

“I am so honored to receive the endorsement of #TimberUnity,” Weber said in a news release. “This is an organization of working families who are in a constant fight to protect their businesses, their jobs and their lives. I promise I will fight for you. Your voice will be my voice.”

Weber, a former elementary school teacher and small business owner in Tillamook, served on the Tillamook City Council before being elected mayor in 2010. Lower, a first-time candidate who lost to Mitchell in the 2018 election, announced another run in December.

Democrats outnumber Republicans in House District 32, where Democrats have held the seat since 2002.

toward tourism management, not necessarily promoting more. The focus is on the visitor and educating the public to the network’s cause.

“I do feel as though some may now have a better understanding of what the network is trying to do,” Heman said.

One thing became clear at the event: the influence of tourism on the community is indispensable to our region.

“Tourism brings a combined \$820 million to Clatsop and Tillamook coun-

ties,” David Reid, executive director of the Astoria-Warrenton Chamber of Commerce said. “You just can’t pull that out and expect the economy to continue on.”

Heman urged others in the community to get involved.

“When this process began over a year ago, we invited any member of the Seaside community who wanted to take part to attend,” he said. “It was open and announced often. I would love to see more residents of Seaside take a more active role.”

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