

Sixth coronavirus case reported in Clatsop County

By **NICOLE BALES**
The Astorian

A sixth positive case of the coronavirus was reported on April 9 in Clatsop County. The man is between 30 and 39 years old and lives in the northern part of the county. He is at home under quarantine, according to the county's Public Health Department. Since March 23, the county has reported five other positive cases of the virus. A woman in her 30s liv-

ing in the northern part of the county was the first case. The four other people who tested positive live in the southern part of the county. They include a woman and a man in their 30s, a man in his 40s and another man in his 50s. Earlier, the county reported that the man in his 30s and the man in his 40s in the southern part of the county had contact with one another. The county said the man in his 50s had contact with another one of the south county cases, but declined to

specify which one. The county said three of the people had recovered from the virus and were no longer under quarantine, but would not specify which cases. The others are under quarantine at home. The Oregon Health Authority reported 1,663 cases and 58 deaths from the coronavirus statewide as of Wednesday morning. The health authority tracked 291 test results in Clatsop County as of Wednesday, including six positive cases.



Clatsop County is tracking six local coronavirus cases.

Alyssa Evans/The Astorian

Closed: ‘Effective immediately’

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“The North Coast continues to experience high traffic, especially to beaches, which puts local communities, health care workers and responders at greater risk than would otherwise occur dealing with base constituents,” Seaside officials wrote in asking for state assistance in communicating the message. Local efforts to close approaches and entrances “have fallen short of remedying the issue.” The request was funneled to the parks department for action. “Effective immediately, the OPRD has closed the ocean shore between the north and south boundaries of Seaside,” the department of parks and recreation wrote in a statement. The department did not regard the ocean shore as closed until these actions happened, Havel added. “But now it is.” “The point here, of course, isn’t to make people find a different way down to the beach,” Havel said. “It’s to get people to stay home until this blows over. This is temporary.”



Signs in Seaside prohibit beach access.

R.J. Marx

Chamber: Has already shed two full-time jobs

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have to find some funding somewhere.” The chamber has already shed two full-time jobs. By the end of April, “I won’t even be able to pay myself,” Owen said. “I have laid everybody off but a part-time communications person.” Many governmental stimulus packages exclude nonprofits with 501(c)(6) status like the chamber, so there’s pressure at the federal level to help organizations like local chambers of commerce viewed as a major piece within the recovery, Owen said. “At the federal level we’re being asked to work for businesses and help them through this process, but then we were excluded from any financial assistance,” he said. “Just like our local businesses, we are trying to apply for each and every loan.” While the chamber receives office space at 7 N. Roosevelt Drive at no charge in a building leased by the City of Seaside Visitors Bureau, the chamber and the visitors bureau are separate organizations residing under one roof while working closely together on many matters, Assistant City Manager Jon Rahl said. The chamber, organized in 1936, operates primarily through membership fees, with some city funding through business license revenue. It also gets funding for special events like Hood to Coast and Seaside Beach Volleyball, the chamber’s most profitable event, bringing in more than \$238,000 in revenue in 2018. In 2018, the chamber declared \$414,325 in revenue and net assets of about \$53,000 after expenses and a fund balance transfer. According to updated city code, the chamber will receive 60% of city business licensing fees collected over the first \$265,000, up to a

maximum of \$330,000, with a cap of \$39,000 per year. The chamber is the recipient of a \$25,000 grant for Fourth of July fireworks through the city’s annual tourism grant program. The chamber will also be eligible to apply for a relief grant announced by the city, Visitors Bureau director of tourism marketing Joshua Heineman said. In the meantime, the chamber continues to provide consultation and outreach to local businesses, helping members navigate a complex federal, national and local relief system. “What I’m hearing is more confusion than anything,” Owen said. “Confusion as to what are these loans, what is this economic stimulus package going to look like. We’ve been told very many iterations throughout the past two or three weeks. What is the process truly going to look like, and what is the product truly going to look like? Who qualifies, who doesn’t and what are the rates?” When the federal Economic Injury Disaster Loan was first presented, business owners were told it would be a grant and not need to be repaid, he said. “Now it’s changed, you get \$1,000 per employee. So that is a big difference between what was initially offered and what it truly has become.” In sorting out options, Owen said he sits in on a call with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce every day for “the most accurate and timely information.” “Unlike larger cities, Seaside is predominantly made up of small businesses,” Owen said. In the short-term, Seaside is probably hit a little bit harder by the economic downturn. “But we are also a destination community, so as things start to come back online we should be one of the communities that start to heal faster

than the others,” Owen said. “People are going to want to travel. People are going to want to go out.” No chamber members have “thrown in the towel” yet, he said, but “people are concerned,” especially with a big summer events schedule. The volleyball tournament, scheduled for Aug. 6-9, is monitoring the COVID-19 pandemic. The 39th annual Hood to Coast remains scheduled for Aug. 28-29 and organizers are also monitoring the situation. Chamber board president Andrew Stein, who owns Logotek, a promotional products and apparel company, said most of his clients are not ordering products to give away at various events. He said his suppliers have cut way back on production, inventory or have shut down. Owen said his wish list to economic recovery would start with a timeline and process of the stimulus loans. “We’ve got people that have applied a week, two weeks ago, and have heard nothing back,” he said. “That would be my number one want, better communication. Number two, I’d like to see the community really start to pull together with ideas for marketing, bringing community back together, finding ways for our kids interact so they don’t lose that social structure.” Seaside is built on relationships, he continued. “We don’t know how we’re going to make this trek, but we all know that we are invested in this community. Together we’re going to get through this. This isn’t going to be one person or one organization — this is going to be a community working together.”

Downtown association seeks relief

The Seaside Downtown Development Association faces similar challenges to the chamber, execu-

tive director Laurie Mespelt said. They will be applying for relief funds from the city and, like the chamber, have been unable to apply for other funding due to their 501(c)(6) or nonprofit business association status. The association, like the chamber, is not a branch of city government. The group, which celebrated 25 years in 2019, is funded largely through membership and events, including two wine walks, flower basket sales, a golf tournament and downtown walking map. Last year, the association received a Tourism Arts Council grant for their Hal-loween Happenin’s event. After an ordinance passed in its third reading at Monday’s City Council meeting, the association also receives 40% of business license fees over the first \$265,000 collected by the city, capped at \$26,000 annually. During the city shutdown, the association is working with the Clatsop County Small Business Development Center to help members navigate loans available and provide information in a “timely, efficient manner.” With Sen. Ron Wyden, Gov. Kate Brown, the city of Seaside and the Lower Columbia Human Resource Management Council, Mespelt said she acts as “the first line of contact with the direct current state of information to pass on to our members.” A social media director compiles information from merchants of hours open and delivery information. “We have a duty to fulfill our nonprofit status and keep moving forward with strong ethics and love for our community,” Mespelt said. “A strong downtown is vital, now more than ever. SDDA has continued on its downtown beautification mission. ... We will be there for our members to make sure our members are here in the future.”

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