

Sasquatch comes to Seaside

SEEN FROM SEASIDE

R.J. MARX



Jason Lancaster, a former top chef at restaurants along the North Coast, is now displaying his culinary skills from inside his Sasquatch Sandwich Co. food cart parked at Hamilton Market on Avenue U.

Lancaster was a chef at Maggie's on the Prom when he met the restaurant's co-owner, William Montero. While Lancaster left Maggie's several years ago, the two met up at the Seaside Golf Course this fall.

Montero invited Lancaster to set up on the parking lot of the market, which he opened in 2019 with family members at the site of Ken's Market.

In December, Seaside approved a special parking lot sales event permit in response to restrictions for the coronavirus pandemic.

"I had the truck and he had the property," Lancaster said while grilling an Asian num pang sandwich — pork belly, cucumbers, pickled carrots, cilantro, spicy mayo on a club roll. "This is exactly what I wanted it to be."

Sasquatch Sandwich has a recurring set of specials including the Sasquatch Reuben, with pastrami, Swiss cheese, pickled cabbage, Russian dressing on marble rye; the Cubano, pork shoulder, ham, Swiss, pickle, mustard and pub roll; and the salami hero and vegetarian garden sandwich on rye or sourdough.

Lancaster, a Seattle native, joined Bridgewater Bistro as a sous chef and graduated to chef de cuisine.

At The Cove restaurant at the Peninsula Golf Course in Long Beach, Washington, he enhanced his reputation with an Iron Chef Goes Coastal award and was mentioned in a "picks" selection by The Oregonian contributor Gerry Frank.

He established a permanent truck as part of a food pod in Astoria before buying a second truck, which he tried out this summer at the Seaside Farmers Market and is now debuting for eight weeks every Friday at the Hamilton.

He is joined by his partner, Amy Myers, who worked at Maggie's as a sous chef.

Myers, a Portland native, grew up in Hillsboro and the Portland area before her family relocated to Seaside. She brings 27



years of experience to the food truck, working at various restaurants since she was around 10.

"I went to culinary school over a decade ago," Myers said. "I used to be the kitchen manager right here in this neighborhood at the former U Street Pub."

The most difficult part of operating a food truck, Lancaster said, is setting up and shutting down.

"You're putting in an hour before you even touch any food," he said.

Unlike in Astoria, where he serves from a fixed location, moving the cart means loading and packing up. Not done properly, once out of the parking lot the inside of the truck "looks like a bomb went off," he said.

Lancaster, Myers and Montero still face a challenge to maintain a long-term spot in Seaside.

In 2018, Seaside restaurant owners largely opposed a request from another food cart owner to operate in Seaside, citing limited housing and the short tourist season, which, they said, put brick-and-mortar businesses at a disadvantage.



Photos by R.J. Marx

ABOVE: Jason Lancaster and Amy Myers inside the Sasquatch Sandwich Co. food truck. TOP: Food trucks may be returning to Seaside as a result of special permits.

All uses in the city's commercial zones, "shall be conducted entirely within a completely enclosed building," Seaside's code reads.

"When I asked for the event permit, I used COVID as the basis for my request," Montero said. "My sense is that we are really not infringing upon the sit-down diners, we're really affecting the fast-food people. There's a need. Even McDonald's and Kentucky Fried Chicken are backed up for blocks."

A challenge looms.

After their first day serving, Montero said, they were told that downtown restaurateurs had complained to the city's planning department about Lancaster's operation.

Montero planned to approach the department to seek a variance for a long-term permit.

If denied, he said, Montero could approach the City Council to try to change the ordinance.

Lancaster said he is confident he will be able to continue to operate in Seaside.

"If places have the right setup and you've got your own garbage disposal and power, I think they're going to allow it," he said.

LETTERS

Column should be used to build community, not tear it down

I love the city I have lived in for the last 56 years and am both happy and proud that our children were raised here, graduating from Seaside High School, participating in sports and learning to swim at our pool.

One way of giving back to the community is to be involved in different groups, organizations, associations or perhaps nonprofits or various boards or councils. I volunteer hundreds of hours per year out of the interest I share with others in the well being of this community we call home, it is a way of showing gratitude.

Part of what a person learns in working with others is the ability to come and reason together. Sometimes this means that we shall agree to disagree after our brainstorming, conversation, debate or even goal setting, but we still move forward in a civil manner and seek out the greater good.

We all should be able to have a voice in the process and understand we're often after the same goal even if the picture in my mind is different than the one in your mind.

Recently I was disparaged in what used to be a community newspaper column where the person made accusations, called names, misquoted me and even assigned to myself the actions of others.

I could have written a much longer retort and replied to the many mistruths and insinuations but I shall spare the readers and simply say that some people feel that others don't have the right to be involved in the process and if one has a differing opinion then they are a bad person.

This type of behavior is simply manipulative and designed to be used as a scare tactic toward the many who may wish to share an opinion. When a community column is turned into a pulpit for bullying it is a sad day indeed and works to tear down rather than promote

community.

Randall L. Frank is a Seaside City Council writing as a private citizen.

Taxpayers, beware of debt risk

The Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District Board of Directors approved the purchase of the Broadway Middle School in their closed session of Dec. 28. What surprises me is how they can move forward without full disclosure of all the inspection reports and the remediation costs to the public.

In the reports I have read there is no estimate of these costs, only that these issues are very expensive and could be into the millions. The roof needs immediate repair estimated at \$4 million. With the purchase price, roof replacement, seismic retrofit, lead paint abatement, asbestos abatement and mold remediation, the costs could reach \$10 million to \$12 million.

Has the board considered these additional costs, repairs and maintenance and ongoing administrative costs. Have they just dismissed them? Why have these issues not been discussed in open session or at least disclosed? Are the taxpayers aware of these costs and that the district receives about \$1.7 million in tax revenues per year plus miscellaneous revenues of about \$1.2 million (which includes \$600,000 opening fund balance) for a total of about \$2.9 million per year, which is all allocated already? Where is the money going to come from to repay the loan and repairs that are needed? What programs will be cut or downsized to fund this debt? Why isn't there transparency on this major cost that the taxpayers will ultimately have to pay?

Taxpayers should be aware of how district residents' money is being spent and how much debt the board will be entering into.

Al Hernandez
Seaside

County vote for president shows how opinions harden

By **NICOLE BALES**
The Astorian

ELSIE — Diane Jette describes herself as an independent voter who is socially liberal and fiscally conservative.

The 74-year-old resident of Elsie, a rural, unincorporated area in the southeastern corner of Clatsop County, said it was her fiscally conservative side that compelled her to vote for President Donald Trump in 2016.

"I had hoped that he would be able to stop our financial bleeding," Jette said.

This year, she said she would have voted for just about anybody to replace Trump.

"His personality has come through and also he's shown himself to be a bigot, which is so, so against my beliefs," Jette said. "You'd like to hope that the leaders you elected are actually somewhat on your side. And then, of course, I found out he was only on his own side."

Elsie was one of three precincts — along with Stanley Acres and part of Warrenton — that favored Trump in 2016 but flipped to former Vice President Joe Biden, the Democrat, in 2020. One precinct — Walluski — switched to the Republican.

Despite the coronavirus pandemic, social unrest across the nation and an economic crisis, the county's vote for president did not shift substantially, suggesting voter opinion has only hardened over the past four years.

The county's precinct map for the November election illustrates the historical advantage for Democrats, as well as the political divide playing out across Oregon and the United States between city and rural neighborhoods.

Biden defeated Trump 54% to 43% in the county. While Biden performed better than former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who received 47% in 2016, Trump pulled slightly more than the 41% he had four years ago.

Voter turnout was about 80%, up only marginally from 2016.

Biden won every city precinct except for part of Warrenton. Only four rural precincts broke against Trump.

"I think one of the takeaways for me when I look at this data for the presidential race, and I think about the upcoming ideological split that I

see on our nominally nonpartisan county commissioner board — I'm always fascinated by how people compartmentalize local politics in a different way," said Andy Davis, the chairman of the Clatsop County Democratic Party.

"That we've got 55% of the county in this case voting for the Democratic nominee for president, and I'm looking at a county commissioner board that appears to me that it'll be 3-2 in a conservative-leaning direction. And that's always interesting to me that there's that split existing."

Davis, in a text message, said, "the challenge going forward is finding ways for those two geographic groups of people to understand each other and work cooperatively, so we don't just swing back and forth each election with the out of power group becoming more aggrieved at the one that happens to be currently in charge."

Lisa Lamping, the chairwoman of the Clatsop County Republican Party, believes the party can grow its base in the 2022 elections.

"I see a real move towards more conservative things because of the extreme policies that seem to be affecting our state right now," Lamping said. "So I think you're seeing a lot of Clatsop citizens that are just kind of fed up. I also think #TimberUnity played a big factor in that, and I think you're probably going to see more of that coming."

She pointed to the victory of Tillamook Mayor Suzanne Weber in the state House District 32 race, the first Republican to win the seat in nearly two decades. Weber nearly tied Debbie Boothe-Schmidt, the Democrat, in Clatsop County, while claiming the Tillamook County and Washington County portions of the district.

"So that tells you right there that some Democrats ... came over and voted for her and some independents I'm sure did," Lamping said.

She thinks liberal state policies and the restrictions aimed to stop the spread of the coronavirus have caused people to become disillusioned with government.

"And it doesn't just affect those issues," Lamping said. "There's a lot of values associated with those choices, too. And so it trickles down beyond just the political side. It trickles down into the value system side and how it's affecting families and our quality of life and how we live."

"And here on the coast, we are a different breed than the city slickers."



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