

Wyden, local officials discuss crisis response

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

Federal money may help Clatsop County expand mobile crisis response.

Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare, the county's mental health provider, has a mobile crisis team available to help law enforcement handle crisis calls, but inadequate funding and staffing has kept it from being a more effective resource for police.

The county plans to invest some of the \$7.8 million it is projected to receive in American Rescue Plan Act money to hire more clinicians.

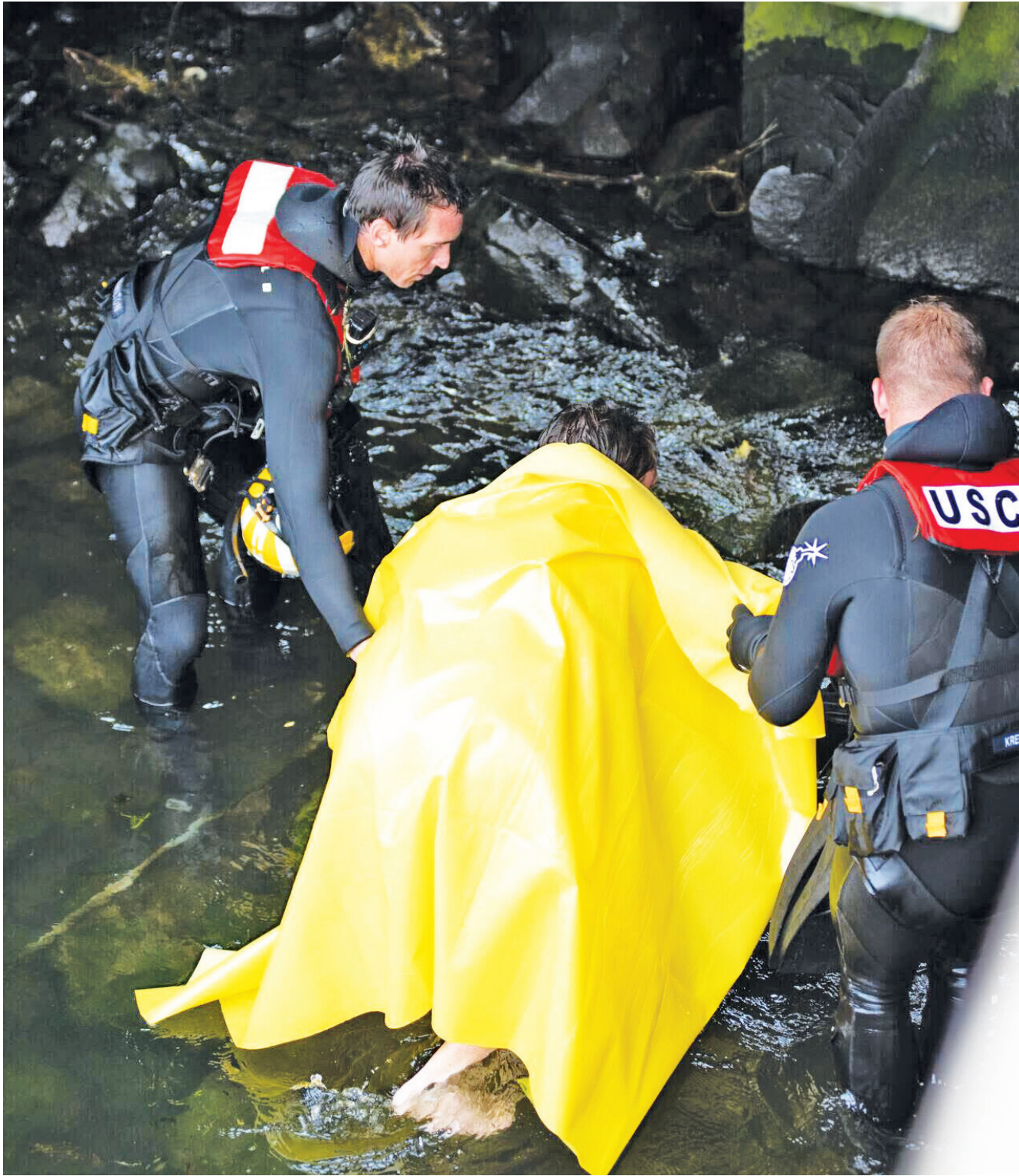
Help may also become available through legislation led by U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden. The Oregon Democrat has pushed to enhance federal Medicaid funding so states can expand on ideas like CAHOOTS, a crisis intervention program of the White Bird Clinic in Eugene.

"Under this approach, when there's a 911 call dealing with someone experiencing a mental health crisis, CAHOOTS sends trained health professionals as first responders instead of just police," Wyden, the chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, said in a statement at a committee hearing on mental health care in June. "Health care providers like it, law enforcement likes it. The American Rescue Plan included a billion-dollar down payment to help states build their own programs like CAHOOTS."

"Now the Congress needs to consider what comes next to build these programs successfully and make sure people are getting the help they need even after the immediate crises end."

During a meeting with law enforcement, social services agencies and political leaders from the county and cities last Friday, Wyden said that while CAHOOTS is a model, it cannot be made into a cookie-cutter approach throughout the county.

The senator said he envisions flexibility and investment in multidisciplinary teams. The discussion, he



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said, was designed to hear from local leaders about what would be helpful.

Amy Baker, the executive director of Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare, estimates that 12 clinicians are needed to cover the entire county 24/7. The mobile crisis team has four staffers trained in mental health counseling.

"I think the challenge is that our funding is often based on population and not on acknowledging the necessary infrastructure that we need just to get the job

done," Baker said.

Differing opinions

There was consensus that more funding is necessary to address the growing number of crisis calls on the North Coast. However, there were differing opinions on where to start.

Astoria Mayor Bruce Jones said the community needs a full-time shelter for people with behavioral health problems.

"Obviously, it would require some significant resources, which certainly

the city of Astoria doesn't have," Jones said. "Nationally, locally, regionally, behavioral health treatment has been grossly underfunded for decades and that needs to change."

"And I would just add to that — that needs to not come at the expense of local law enforcement. Local law enforcement needs the resources it has to keep our community safe. So I would like to see the mental health deficits addressed with resources, not funding at the expense of law

enforcement."

Astoria Police Chief Geoff Spalding said many of the city's crisis calls involve people who are homeless.

"And we talk about all the things we want to do for our homeless population and if we don't address the mental health component of that, my personal feeling is that most of the other solutions aren't going to be effective," the police chief said. "And so for me, I think we really need additional resources to address a significant and growing prob-

lem in our city."

Sheriff Matt Phillips said that because there are people who are unwilling to engage in services, some end up in the criminal justice system.

"And that's a chance, I think, when we can maybe have an intervention," the sheriff said. "We need to have resources to provide treatment to someone while they're in custody. And certainly we're having challenges with that process."

Several people pointed to drug and alcohol abuse and the housing crunch as problems exacerbating the issue.

'Unrealistic'

Josh Marquis, a former district attorney, said another problem is that almost all of the money for mental health services comes from the federal government.

"... the county puts in exactly zero money of its own into mental health," he said. "That money comes from primarily federal and secondarily state funds. Now, on the other hand, asking the county to shoulder a big, big part of it would be unrealistic."

Gearhart Police Chief Jeff Bowman said that while a model like CAHOOTS may be nice, it does not address the elephant in the room.

"The root problem is why are we dealing with them to begin with out on the street?" he said. "Whether they're homeless or they're not medicated or whatever reason — that's the issue really that should be taken care of first. You can keep throwing money at us to take care of the immediate issue, but it doesn't stop the bleeding. The bleeding stops way before that."

In January, in an announcement meant to draw attention to the lack of mental health treatment options, Bowman said his officers would no longer respond to mental health calls unless there is an imminent threat of physical harm.

"There is no question that in an ideal world the very first dollar should always be for prevention — no question about it," Wyden said. "The reality is what do we do when the world is not ideal?"

PUBLIC SAFETY LOG



June 20

8:46 a.m., 800 block Avenue S: Caller requests a welfare check for a man described as standing in the same spot for three days. The person tells police they are fine.

4:28 p.m., 1000 block S. Downing: Caller reports his grandson was thrown off his bike by a stranger.

8:11 p.m., S. Lincoln: Police respond to a medical call regarding a dog/animal complaint.

11:47 p.m., 2100 block S. Franklin: Caller reports neighbor yelling racial slurs and threatening him. Police speak to the neighbor about their conduct.

June 21

8:32 p.m., Mill Ponds: An assault is reported.

9:34 p.m., Bob Chisholm parking area: A woman complained about regarding garbage strewn around her motorhome parked in the area says she is re-arranging her belongings. Police advise her of the complaint.

June 22

11:44 a.m., First Avenue: A disturbance is reported.

6:14 p.m., 800 block N. Roosevelt: Police intervene to a verbal argument at a drive-through restaurant where one of the parties objected to being recorded. It was explained to the person the legality of video recording. Police stayed on scene until the objecting party left the premises.

10:35 p.m., Turnaround: A child reported missing is reunited with its parents.

June 23

2:36 a.m., East end of Avenue D: Transients reported arguing in a camp agree to gather their

belongings and part ways.

8:31 a.m., Chamber restrooms: Public works and police respond to a request to get transients blocking the public restrooms to move along. Subjects agree to leave.

9:05 a.m., 1200 block S. Holladay Drive: Caller requests transients leave the area. A female refuses to identify herself but eventually leaves.

1:03 p.m., 1200 block S. Holladay: Caller at a coffee cart reports someone gave them a fake \$20 to pay for items purchased.

3:32 p.m., 500 block Avenue U: Caller reports their son slashed their car tires.

4:25 p.m., 400 block S. Roosevelt: Caller reports van with dogs locked inside for a week. Police make contact with the owner of the van who said he lost the key and is having a new one made.

11:39 p.m., S. Roosevelt: An intoxicated man reported in the roadway says he will move along and understands he must stay out of the roadway.

June 24

9:20 p.m., Fourth and Holladay: Fireworks reported.

10:15 p.m., Beach: A young boy reported lost or missing on the beach is located and reunited with his family members.

11:56 p.m., 800 block S. Roosevelt: A person is trespassed.

June 25

5:41 a.m., 200 block S. Roosevelt: Caller reports their car was illegally entered.

6:24 a.m., Avenue U and the beach: A disturbance is reported.

12:28 p.m., 1700 block N. Roosevelt: Caller reports a male who has parked himself under a tree and is asleep. Officers make contact and subject says he will move along.

June 26

12:45 p.m., Trend West alleyway: Caller reports two very young children urinating in public.

2:13 p.m., Shilo Inn/Turnaround: A missing person is reported.

3:20 p.m., 400 block S. Holladay: A person is arrested on a warrant.

3:56 p.m., Semaphore 12: A missing person is reported.

4:18 p.m., Beach: A missing person is reported.

4:29 p.m., Goodman Park: Two rings found in the park are turned into police for safekeeping.

7:15 p.m., Avenue U: A disturbance is reported.

June 28

7:26 a.m., Wahanna Road: Subject is arrested and held on a Clatsop County Sheriff's warrant.

8:19 a.m., 1700 block S. Prom: Caller reports a crow flew into her bathroom. Police assist getting the bird safely out.

11:52 a.m., Police headquarters: A resident turns in guns for safekeeping.

6:43 p.m., 500 block N. Holladay: A missing person is reported.

June 29

3:10 p.m., Avenue G and Franklin: Property crimes reported.

6:07 p.m., Avenue A: Caller wishes to report an attempted break-in.

7:54 p.m., Clatsop Shores Apartments: Property crimes are reported.

June 30

8 a.m., 600 block S. Holladay: Caller wants transient sleeping on their property to move along. The subject was contacted and advised.

8:19 a.m., 400 block Avenue P: Caller says someone entered her garage and stole her laptop.

10:36 a.m., Fourth and Roosevelt: Caller reports road

rage incident saying the other party pulled out a knife during a confrontation. Police searched the area for the person with negative results.

12:25 p.m., 1100 block Broadway: Caller reports dog left in car for over a half hour. Police check on the dog and see the windows are open and the dog is just lonely.

1:04 p.m., 1000 block S. Downing: Caller reports an intruder who broke into her apartment was attacked by her dog.

July 1

12:28 a.m., Turnaround: A group of juveniles out after curfew are turned over to a responsible adult who said they would take the kids home. No further police action was required.

12:31 a.m., First Avenue Bridge: An inebriated man is given a courtesy ride home after being reported pacing on the bridge.

3:00 a.m., 11th and Prom: An assault is reported.

11:04 a.m., 500 block Beach Drive: A person reports someone stole her sewing scissors.

12:48 p.m., 1100 block N. Roosevelt: Police facilitated in an information exchange at an accident where a dog left in a vehicle put the gear in neutral, causing the vehicle to roll and strike another vehicle. No injuries were reported.

12:51 p.m., U.S. Highway 101 by Motel 6: Police received two reports of an unescorted child running in the road. Police could not locate.

July 2

11:29 a.m., Library: Caller requests subject be trespassed from the library.

2:59 p.m., Avenue E and Beach Drive: Individual selling firewood without a business license was upset about a little girl selling lemonade and wanted to know if she had a business license. Police were advised.

7:08 p.m., 12th and Beach: Fireworks violation.

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