

# Cannon Beach will pay legal fees for public works director in ethics case

By **KATIE FRANKOWICZ**  
The Astorian

CANNON BEACH — Karen La Bonte, the city's public works director, racked up an estimated \$14,000 in legal expenses this year while dealing with an ethics probe by the state, City Manager Bruce St. Denis said.

Last week, he asked the City Council to cover half.

It was a step back from a resolution St. Denis proposed last week that asked the city to pay for up to \$15,000 of La Bonte's legal fees. His suggestion faced almost immediate pushback from some in the community. St. Denis later removed the item from the council's meeting agenda.

Since then, the city's insurance carrier has determined it will cover up to \$7,500. On Tuesday, city councilors voted 4-1 in favor of an updated proposal from St. Denis to pay up to an additional \$8,000.

In October, the Oregon Government Ethics Commission determined La Bonte violated state conflict of interest laws when the city used a company she co-owns

with her husband to produce pandemic-related signs and other products.

La Bonte had verbally disclosed her ties with Cannon Beach Design Co., but failed to declare a potential conflict of interest in writing before city transactions with the business, the state found. La Bonte was fined \$1,000.

St. Denis called the ethics violation a technicality. The purpose of the resolution he proposed Tuesday was not just to reimburse La Bonte. It was to offer support for her as well, he said.

St. Denis contends La Bonte has been the victim of harassment by Manzanita resident Rusty Morris, who filed several complaints with the Ethics Commission against La Bonte. Morris has also filed complaints with the Clatsop County Sheriff's Office and circulated an online petition to remove La Bonte from her position.

La Bonte and St. Denis say the complaints are not based in fact and stem from a personal grievance.

"As city manager, I believe the city has an obligation to support public employees in a situation like what Ms. La Bonte has experienced," St. Denis wrote in a lengthy memo to city councilors. "One in which someone used her position with the city to settle a grudge.

"Failure to do so," he added, "sends a message to current and future employees that in a situation which results in them experiencing significant, undeserved humiliation and personal expenses, they should not expect to be supported by the city and its citizens."

An investigator with the Ethics Commission said it did not appear that La Bonte used her position to benefit herself financially. But Morris refutes St. Denis's characterization. He says he filed the complaints because of sincere concerns that La Bonte was abusing her position.

He was not alone in opposing St. Denis' request to reimburse La Bonte for her legal expenses. City Councilor Robin Risley voted against the resolution last Tuesday, the only "no" vote.

Insurance is already covering up to its maximum, Risley said. The money the City Council was being asked to approve would be

coming from taxpayers. "This sets a bad precedent to pay for employee ethical violations over and above what's covered in insurance," Risley argued.

While a number of people wrote in support of La Bonte, others asked the city to reconsider the resolution.

La Bonte violated state ethics laws, noted Hannah Buschert and Erik Ostrander, managers of Sea Breeze Court. For the city to cover her legal fees further erodes public trust, they wrote in a letter to city councilors.

"If La Bonte were to have been found not guilty of these violations then, without a doubt, her legal fees should be covered by the funds in support of protecting employees from false accusations by a former associate," they wrote. "However, to cover these fees after being found guilty shows that whistleblowing on the city is going to be ignored, as if the city is above the rules," they added, "and if the whistleblowing is found to be truthful, and founded by a third party, that there are no repercussions for the guilty parties within the city."

## OBITUARIES

### Judith Gale Capellen

Seaside  
1942 — 2021

Judith "Judy" Gale Capellen was born in a small north Idaho sawmill town where everyone knew your name.

She grew up with music in her life, starting piano lessons at age 5, joining a dance band in high school and dancing to a Louis Armstrong band in college.

She purchased a Hammond organ, took a few organ lessons and eventually served as an organist for two churches. One of Judy's greatest joys was sitting at the organ or piano making music.

With a degree from the University of Idaho, Judy moved five times before settling in Astoria. She loved

being a full-time mom to three, and started working outside the home when her youngest was in the third grade. As every Mom in that era did, she struggled balancing the requirements of home and work.

Judy was deeply proud of her kids, who were bright, fun and motivated to help when needed. Her three children, their spouses and her six grandkids were a source of tremendous joy.

Judy organized many family gatherings at the beach, the mountains, Lake Pend Oreille and in Seaside. She wrote plays for Halloween and Christmas with parts for all, and room for made-up

lines and spontaneous action.

After working in finance and accounting as a controller and chief financial officer, Judy decided to return to graduate school, and earned a master's degree at Portland State University at a time when many of her peers were contemplating retirement.

Judy loved working with small businesses. Helping owners understand the numbers was important to her, for it kept businesses alive and people employed.

Judy battled lymphoma for three years, surrounded by prayers from pillars of her church, friends and family. Recently, Judy's cancer resurfaced. She was sometimes

overwhelmed by the love and support she received, and was always grateful for it.

Judy hiked Mount Hood and Mount Baker when younger. More recently, she roasted sandy hot dogs at the beach, and would drive 10 hours with kids, grandkids and a dog to Lake Pend Oreille to swim in the icy cold waters.

To honor Judy's memory, please have a party with friends and family, enjoying good food, a glass of wine and lots of music.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Lower Columbia Hospice or the Seaside Public Library.

### Carla Lee Hall

Warrenton  
Aug. 22, 1956 — Oct. 31, 2021

Carla was born Aug. 22, 1956, in Everett, Washington, to Leslie and Donna Hanson.

In 1983, she met Don Hall, fell in love, and two years later they married in 1985.

Carla had four children: Lon, Trisha, Adam and Brandon. She also had four grandchildren: Kimber, Brianna, Augusta and Nathaniel; and two step-grandchildren, Addison and Paislie. Carla had three sisters, as well, Cheryl, Carmen and Candie.

Carla had an eye for art. She enjoyed doing stained glass, watercolor painting, hand-crafted art from the beach and gardening for many years. She loved walking through antique shops, and had an eye for treasure.

She loved working in the garden and the greenhouse; she so loved the flowers. Her favorite was the first flower of the spring, daffodils, followed by lilacs and hydrangeas.

She loved all of God's critters. She had two cats, two birds and several fish.



Agates collected by Carla Lee Hall.

She loved her bird feeders, and loved watching all of the different birds that came to them. She so loved her ring-necked doves.

Carla loved beachcombing, and enjoyed long walks on the beach holding hands with her husband. Her favorite place was the Inn At Spanish Head in Lincoln City. The waves would crash at the base of the room, and when the tide went down,

she would walk for hours picking up sea glass and agates.

She also loved Canada. Three years ago, she went to Whistler, and fell in love with riding the gondolas. She loved to travel.

Carla enjoyed being pampered, and enjoyed fine dining. She loved going to wineries to sit and enjoy a glass of wine. Her favorite was Mexican food, Mexican

shrimp cocktails and a bowl of tortilla soup.

Carla had many health challenges in 2010. She went through open heart surgery, and in 2012 she survived cancer. She had many surgeries, and always fought through it. She was a survivor, and the toughest person that I have ever met.

She loved sitting by a fire in the back yard, sometimes till dark, having dinner outside by the fire and, of course, a glass of pinot gris.

Carla and Don were married for 36 years and loved each other every day.

Carla, you will be missed by many, but never forgotten. She was a pure and loving soul. On Oct. 31, 2021, God came and took her home. She will be reunited with her parents and her sister in heaven. Sweetie, you did an awesome job. We all love you so much.

Please send any donations to the Oregon Health and Sciences University Northwest Clinic for Voice and Swallowing, P.O. Box 29017, Portland, OR 97296 (give.ohsufoundation.org).

## PUBLIC SAFETY LOG

**SEASIDE POLICE DEPT.**  
PUBLIC SAFETY LOG

**Nov. 5**  
**6:13 p.m.**, 10th and Neganicum: A disturbance is reported.

**10:05 p.m.**, Avenue U: Suspects are trespassed from a location after a disturbance is reported.

**11:51 p.m.**, 12th and Franklin: Caller reports "a half-naked female running down the road, screaming."

**Nov. 6**  
**5:39 p.m.**, U.S. Highway 101 and Fifth Avenue: Motor vehicle accident with serious injuries reported. EMS on scene.

**Nov. 7**  
**8:21 a.m.**, Avenue K and the Prom: Caller reports transient sleeping on a bench with all their belongings scattered. Police make contact with the person and advise them to clean up their mess.

**1:31 p.m.**, Avenue G: Juveniles are reported acting suspicious. Patrol says they will canvass the area.

**Nov. 8**  
**3:08 p.m.**, 800 block S. Roosevelt: While responding to a reported disturbance at a gas pump, police arrest a subject wanted on a felony warrant issued by the Clatsop County Sheriff's office.

**4:28 p.m.**, Avenue T and the Prom: Police are advised of a transient camp; on arrival, they find it unoccupied.

**Nov. 9**  
**6:45 a.m.**, 1900 Spruce Drive: Caller says a man is at his front door threatening to kill him. On arrival, police determine the subject is on drugs. Medix is called.

## DEATH NOTICE

**Judith Gale Capellen**  
Nov. 10, 2021

CAPELLEN, Judith Gale, 79, of Seaside, died in Seaside. Ocean View Funeral & Cremation Service of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

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