

# Voters pass food tax in Cannon Beach

By **KATIE FRANKOWICZ**  
The Astorian

CANNON BEACH — A controversial food tax has passed by only four votes.

Clatsop County certified the Nov. 2 election on Monday. The measure's slim lead held at 379 votes to 375. The margin, tight as it is, is not enough to trigger an automatic recount. However, people have until Dec. 7 to submit a request for a recount with the state.

The 5% tax applies to prepared food sold at restaurants and similar businesses. Revenue generated by the tax — an estimated \$1.7 million annually — will be split between the city and the Cannon Beach Rural Fire Protection District. The city plans to use its portion of the money to help fund a new City Hall and police station. For the fire district, the money will go toward operational costs.

Consumers won't start to see the tax on their bills until next summer. But for city staff and elected officials, who had been waiting for the election to be certified, work on how to actually implement the tax must begin soon.

"There's a lot of work to do between now and then," Mayor Sam Steidel said.

The reasons for the tax have been debated in Cannon Beach since the measure was first proposed. Now that the tax is moving forward, Steidel said officials need to make sure the rollout is clear and understandable to the community.

"This is something new so we want to get it right," Steidel said. "We want to do it properly and openly."

The tax dominated City Council meetings for months, but it was a big item that involved other big items, such as a new City Hall. Though city councilors settled on rebuilding at the location of the present City Hall facility, that discussion is still in its infancy, Steidel said.

Then there is the question of how to budget the food tax. City officials are gearing up to prepare the next fiscal year's budget, but it is still unknown how the tax revenue will be accounted for in those documents. The fire district and the city are not sure what to



Lydia Ely/The Astorian  
**Shane Corbin, front, and Sean Corbin, back, the co-owners of Corbins along with Sean's wife, Crystal, prepare for dinner before doors open. Many restaurants are critical of a food tax.**

expect in revenue returns in the early months of the tax.

The food tax is meant to target tourist dollars. It was promoted as a way to get visitors to help cover the costs of needed infrastructure upgrades in the city and rising calls for emergency services.

Proponents emphasized the passthrough nature of the tax and believe businesses who administer the tax will not suffer as a

result. Visitors, they argue, probably won't even notice. Many visitors travel to Cannon Beach from areas that already have sales taxes, they said.

But business owners argue that administering the tax will bring additional costs and the tax could be a deterrent to customers. They worry about the overall impact after nearly two years of pandemic-related restrictions and disruptions.

The City Council had considered passing the tax as an ordinance. City Councilor Robin Risley pushed for the matter to go to voters and ultimately voted with the majority to put the tax on the November ballot.

"I felt it was a big enough issue that the citizens should make that decision," she said.

To her, the close vote justified this approach: It showed just how important the issue was to the community, she said.

## Leisure and hospitality likely to drive job growth over next decade

By **ABBEY McDONALD**  
The Astorian

Leisure and hospitality is expected to bounce back from the coronavirus pandemic and drive job growth in Oregon over the next decade.

The sector — among the hardest hit by COVID-19 — is projected to gain nearly 74,000 jobs by 2030, according to the Oregon Employment Department. The growth is tied to the economic recovery and pent-up demand for travel and recreation.

Much of the growth will come from restoring jobs that were cut during the pandemic. The fastest-growing jobs include cooks, bartenders, waiters and fast-food workers.

"I think when it comes to the comeback, it's traditionally been the industry that bounces back the quickest," said David Reid, the executive director of the Astoria-Warrenton Area Chamber of Commerce.

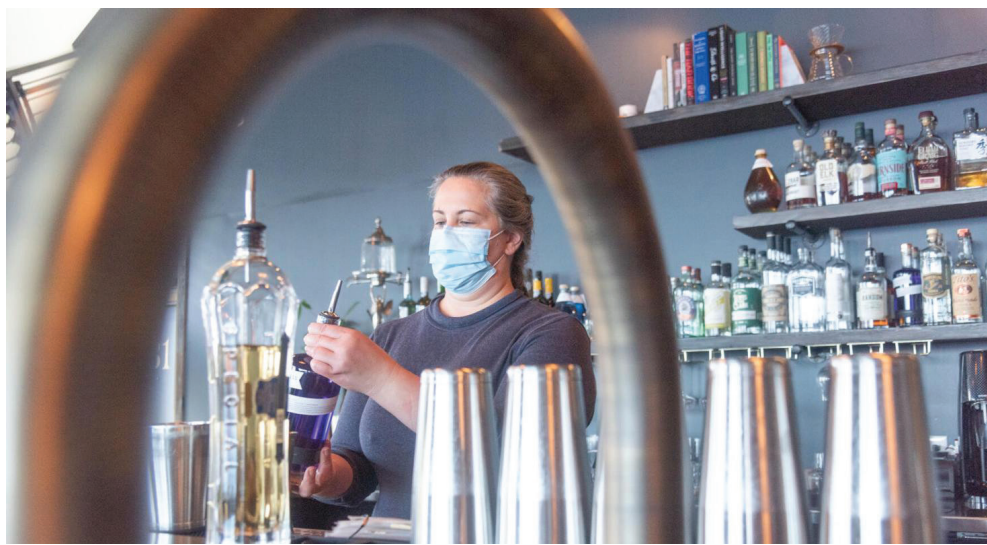
Leisure and hospitality is often immune to the motion sickness of rapid rehiring.

Before the pandemic, Clatsop County's leisure and hospitality sector would fluctuate by about 1,000 workers — a quarter of its workforce — each busy season.

When the pandemic hit, leisure and hospitality lost over 2,600 jobs in the county in March and April 2020, the Employment Department found.

Job numbers have been creeping up since then, and as of September, the sector was about 10% behind employment in September 2019.

"When the economy comes back, people start getting money. Then they start going on vacation," Reid said. "They have this sort of pent-up demand for services — we saw that



Lydia Ely/The Astorian  
**Lynn Helmel, a bartender at the Bowline Hotel, prepares a drink.**

**THE LEISURE AND HOSPITALITY SECTOR — AMONG THE HARDEST HIT BY COVID-19 — IS PROJECTED TO GAIN NEARLY 74,000 JOBS BY 2030, ACCORDING TO THE OREGON EMPLOYMENT DEPARTMENT. THE GROWTH IS TIED TO THE ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND PENT-UP DEMAND FOR TRAVEL AND RECREATION.**

in whiplash fashion this last year — where as soon as we were able to travel we all did in somewhat different ways."

At over 16% job growth across all industries by 2030, Northwest Oregon is projected to be among the fastest-growing regions in the state.

Given the rebound from the pandemic and new businesses in the region, Reid said "growth is inevitable."

Tourism, which makes up about a quarter of Clatsop County's economic base, will play a significant role in the recovery, said Kevin Leahy, the executive director of Clat-

sop Economic Development Resources.

"It decimated it, with the pandemic, with everything that was shut down," he said. "It seems like it's been going on forever, and I guess that it has. So when you look at when the pandemic first started most restaurants closed, for example, and hotels."

Quick thinking, like investing in takeout options and altering operations, kept businesses afloat. Leahy said government relief money was also a lifesaver. Many of the businesses that were able to pivot and retain employees are in better position to snap back.

"We have many restaurants and hotels here that in the dark times continued to make payroll for their long-term staff, because they knew that if they didn't do that, they'd lose them," Leahy said.

Beyond pandemic recovery, new businesses are expected to contribute to the decade's job growth.

The Bowline Hotel, part of Adrift Hospitality, created around 30 jobs when it opened last summer at a former anchovy processing plant on the waterfront in Astoria.

Tiffany Turner, Adrift Hospitality's co-founder, said she expects local jobs in leisure and hospitality to grow alongside Portland and Seattle, though Adrift does not plan on expanding its workforce at this time.

She said it's important for the tourism industry to grow responsibly, with the greater community in mind.

"So, what type of visitors do we want to come here, and how do we want to make sure that they're treating our communities with the respect that they deserve?" Turner said.

The balance involves creating businesses that will serve visitors, she said, while also keeping money in the community and providing meaningful jobs for locals.

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