

Johnson resigns from state Senate to focus on governor's race



State Sen. Betsy Johnson is running for governor as an independent.

By ERICK BENGEL
The Astorian

State Sen. Betsy Johnson announced that she will resign from the state Senate to focus on her independent campaign for governor.

The Scappoose Democrat said her resignation was effective immediately.

"Serving in the Senate has never been a part-time job for me but neither is running for governor. Northwest Oregon deserves a full-time senator and running for governor is a full-time job," Johnson said in a statement.

Johnson represents state Senate District 16, which covers the North Coast.

Elected to the state House of Representatives in 2000, she served until 2005, when she was appointed to finish the Senate term of Joan Dukes. She was elected to the Senate in 2006 and is in her fourth term.

"Together, we've done some great things," Johnson said. "I will never forget the opportunity you've given this daughter of Oregon to serve, to learn and to continue to lead."

Under state law, county commissioners in Senate District 16 will make the appointment to fill Johnson's vacancy in the Senate until a new senator is elected next year. The Democratic Party will recommend nominees.

State Rep. Suzanne Weber, R-Tilla-

mook, has announced she will run for Senate District 16 next year.

Johnson will resign from the Democratic Party to pursue her independent campaign for governor. She needs to gather more than 23,700 signatures by next summer to qualify as a nonaffiliated candidate for the November 2022 ballot.

Andy Davis, the chairman of the Clatsop County Democratic Party, said, "It's a surprise that she's taking this step right now, though I understand wanting to concentrate on the governor's race."

"On a logistical level, I wish we had more time to prepare for the upcoming legislative session."

He said Johnson's decision to resign puts her replacement in a bind because that person will have to climb a steep learning curve. "But we'll make the best of it," Davis said.

Davis said he talked to the state Democratic Party to coordinate steps for finding Johnson's replacement. The Clatsop County Democratic Party had anticipated running someone next year for Johnson's seat and so far hadn't settled on anyone, he said. The senator's announcement speeds up the timeline.

Asked who might step up, Davis said, "Given we just found out, I haven't had time to talk to anybody to even sound them out. We've got a couple of names that we might try, but I certainly haven't got anybody that would be committed to that yet."

Pot shop: Park district director and board president seek to block license

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"The SRC may not meet the OLCC (Oregon Liquor and Cannabis Commission) definition of a school," Skyler Archibald, the executive director of the park district, told the City Council last Monday. "Clearly it is a building that's used for the growth and development of children and youth. It is our position that this location is not suitable for a dispensary due to its proximity to the vulnerable populations we are currently serving and will continue to serve at the SRC."

Archibald was joined by Katharine Parker, the president of the park district's board, and Elizabeth Friedman, of the Northwest Regional Education Service District, which leases space in the recreation center.

"SEPRD is working towards creating a family-friendly space to meet community needs," Parker said. "And I believe that the proposed location is not a

good fit for our kids and for our community. Our youth do not need to be exposed to cannabis at such a young age."

She called for emergency action prohibiting the shop.

"By adopting this emergency ordinance, the Seaside City Council will be protecting the youth of our community in the heart of Seaside," Parker said.

The city is in the process of responding to a Oregon Liquor and Cannabis Commission land use compatibility request, Planning Director Kevin Cupples said. The applicant, CCC Holding Co. LLC, intends to use a suite in the building as a retail marijuana dispensary.

Before licensing, Seaside must complete a section in the land use compatibility statement indicating whether the proposed use meets the city's land use regulations.

Mayor Jay Barber asked the city manager to con-

sult with the city attorney to determine if there is any action that can be taken.

"Would you proceed to give us as quickly as possible any feedback as possible regarding any options that we have?" he asked.

After a legal review, Kimberley Jordan, the city recorder, said last Friday that the retailer had all his paperwork in long before the public comment from the park district and others on Monday.

An emergency ordinance for this particular cannabis shop cannot be done, Jordan said, but the City Council can pass an ordinance for future shops that may be a concern.

"We're just simply following the rules that you've laid out and the state's laid out at this point," City Manager Mark Winstanley said at last Monday's meeting. "And just like any other applicant, they have the right to have us go through the process."

Water bond refinance to fund wastewater sludge dryer

By R.J. MARX
Seaside Signal

The city will refinance old general obligation bonds and finance improvements to the wastewater system.

The City Council unanimously approved up to \$5 million to reimburse itself for the capital expenditures associated with the wastewater project.

Refunding bonds issued in 2007, 2011 and 2012 will result in debt service savings, City Manager Mark Winstanley said.

A portion of this will finance the sludge dryer at the city's wastewater treatment plant, estimated at \$3.3 million.

With the new equipment, the city can provide U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Class A biosolid suitable for agriculture pur-

poses, which the city could turn a profit from.

Seaside's biosolids are so rich in nutrients that it would not require watering or nitrogen pellets to produce higher yields.

The cost includes the dryer and centrifuge with an additional \$700,000 for construction and engineering.

City councilors and Mayor Jay Barber unanimously approved the bond refinancing and sale.

Camping: Public hearing set for January

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People may legally sleep in cars in publicly owned lots, also from 8 p.m. to 6 a.m. It is against the law to store camp paraphernalia on the publicly owned property during the day.

Details of the ordinance concerned Councilor Tita Montero, starting with clarifying definitions, hours of enforcement, rule limitations, liability and rules for homeowners permitting camping on their properties, including fees they may potentially charge for utilities or expenses.

She asked for a map of locations considered off limits and where camping could be allowed.

Montero also requested copies of relevant statutes be accessible and hard copies available that residents without internet access be able to

view. "I'd like to make sure that all of these referenced documents are easily obtainable by anybody who is going to be under this ordinance. And that means anybody from a homeowner to a homeless person."

Because the ordinance originated in Coos Bay, she also sought feedback from Coos Bay.

"I would like to know, in Coos Bay, where did those people go?" Montero asked. "Did they move and sit in the streets somewhere in Coos Bay? Because most of these people don't have another place to go. And so I really would like to understand more. What have been the results in Coos Bay? Not just from the Coos Bay Police Department, but I'd like to hear it from a city councilor. I'd like to hear it from somebody who maybe has had

people camp in their yards. Because we can learn from other people's experience."

With Seaside legal counsel Dan Van Thiel absent, answers remain.

"This does not mean that by any stretch of the imagination that this ordinance is perfect," Winstanley said. "It's not. Staff is going to listen very carefully to councilors' questions, discuss these items and come back to you at your next council meeting with the answer."

The council and Mayor Jay Barber unanimously voted to approve the first reading of the ordinance.

A public hearing and second reading will come in January.

"Next meeting, I'm hoping that we'll hear from the community a little more," Barber said. "They're just now learning about this."



Building Photo

Proposed location of a cannabis dispensary on North Roosevelt Drive.



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