

Seaside police log homeless response and mental health

By R.J. MARX
Seaside Signal

It was no coincidence that Seaside police delivered their annual report at the May meeting, with Peace Officers Memorial Day on May 15.

“Our law enforcement officers are the guardians of life and property; defenders of the individual right to be free; warriors in the battle against crime; and are dedicated to the preservation of life and property,” Mayor Jay Barber wrote in the proclamation read by Chief Dave Ham.

The 2021 end-of-year report showed the rising response level and expanded roles of Seaside’s police department, with almost 10,000 calls for service in 2021, up 3% from 2020 and a 5% increase from 2017.

Those calls could be any-



Dave Ham

thing from a criminal report to a log entry and a response to a dog barking, Ham said.

Total traffic stops increased 17%, to 2,856, though infractions dipped 18%, 230 accidents were reported, up from 173 in 2020.

Of more serious part 1 crimes, the city recorded 136 assaults, 27 burglaries

and 13 motor vehicle thefts. Larceny increased 7% year to year, with 332 in 2021. Police made 33 drug law arrests, down 13% from 2021.

Of part 2 or misdemeanor crimes, there were 43 charges for driving while under the influence of intoxicants and 260 disorderly conduct arrests.

The city recorded more than 700 responses for homelessness and 570 mental health contacts in 2021.

The city will often work with county agencies prior to making an arrest, Ham said. “If we’ve got somebody in crisis needing help, that is really something that may not very well be a police issue,” he said.

The department — nine full-time patrol officers and eight communications personnel — operated throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Most of our services offered were operational with some limitations,” Ham said. “Our lobby remained closed with the exception of some short in person business occurring within the building, while maintaining social distancing and mask use. Our patrol operations continued with little negative impact to our community.”

Officer Evan Edwards and Justin Gagnon each earned promotions to corporal.

The department hired Jason Johnson as a patrol officer and Paul Knoch as community service officer.

“Both are working in a solo capacity and we are again excited to have them on,” Ham said.

The city’s proclamation also paid tribute to Jason Goodding, the Seaside police sergeant killed in 2016 in the line of duty, and marked the “valor, service, and dedication of all police officers.”

OBITUARIES

Gary Wesley Georgeson

Astoria
Feb. 23, 1946 — May 12, 2022

Gary Wesley Georgeson, 76, of Astoria, passed away May 12, 2022. Gary was born to Gilbert and Wanda Georgeson on Feb. 23, 1946, in San Francisco.

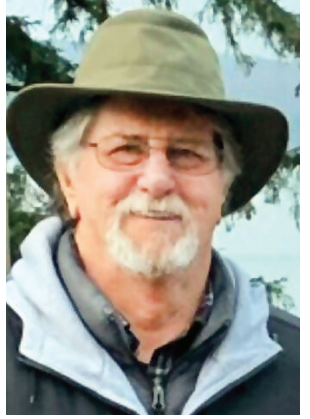
He spent a lot of time in California and on the Oregon Coast.

Gary served in Vietnam with the Army.

Gary was an outdoorsman. His passions included kayaking, hiking, camping, archery and black powder shooting clubs.

Gary was the kindest man, who was always willing to help anyone in need. He was loved by many, and his friends were like a family to him and his wife, Jane.

Gary is survived by his wife, Jane Georgeson, of Astoria; brother, Harvey Georgeson, and his wife, Sharon Georgeson, of Carson City, Nevada; his daughter, Kellie Georgeson Kerr, of Tacoma, Washington; his stepson, Stuart Arnold, and his wife, Tami



Arnold, of Astoria; and eight grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren.

He will be greatly missed by so many, but we know his beautiful soul has moved on to the next chapter.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Alzheimer’s Association, act.alz.org, in honor of his soul mate, Jane.

DEATH NOTICE

Lawrence Albert Holt

May 6, 2022

HOLT, Lawrence Albert, 77, of Astoria, died in Astoria. Hughes-Ransom Mortuary is in charge of the arrangements.

Clatsop County names new public health director

Seaside Signal

Clatsop County has chosen a new public health director.

Jiancheng Huang, the former director of the Oswego County Health Department in New York, is slated to step into the role in July, the county announced on Monday.

He replaces Margo Lalich, who in March 2021 took over as interim public health director for former director Michael McNickle.

Huang also directed the Maine Immunization Program, as well as worked for the Maine Bureau of Health and the University of Pennsylvania’s Scheie Eye Institute, the county said



Lydia Ely/The Astorian

Astoria said staffing issues have improved at the 911 dispatch center.

Astoria emergency dispatch ends temporary merger with Seaside

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

Emergency dispatchers returned to Astoria earlier this month after temporarily merging with Seaside over the past several months.

The move to Seaside was prompted by staffing shortages at Astoria’s 911 dispatch center, which reached a critical point last fall. The merger, ideally, should have been a flip of the switch, but instead it exposed deficiencies in technology and interoperability that left many emergency responders on the North Coast frustrated.

The challenges also revived talks about whether Astoria and Seaside should combine emergency dispatch centers into a single countywide 911 dispatch center, a conversation that has occurred off-and-on for more than 20 years.

Jeremy Hipes, Astoria’s emergency communications manager, said staffing is improving, and he is encouraged by the applicants and people in training. The cities are also continuing to coordinate on upgrades to improve interoperability.

Seaside has agreed to temporarily assign a dispatcher to Astoria until a new hire is fully trained. Astoria is still working toward hiring and training five additional staffers to meet the dispatch center’s minimum for full operations.

“The hope is that we’ll be in a much better place by

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Sheriff Matt Phillips

the end of summer,” Hipes said. “We’re just going to have to make it through summer and then we should be able to handle our pressures a little better without necessarily having to have assistance from our surrounding agencies.”

He said that as the police department continues to address the staffing challenges, answering emergency calls will be the priority. That means people calling the nonemergency line may have to wait a little longer than usual until someone picks up.

Eric Halverson, Astoria’s interim police chief, said the department is also continuing to look at different technologies that could be applied to reduce some of the pressure on dispatchers.

“Ultimately, the goal is to continue to add staffing and that’s what we’re focused on, but we’re still looking at other options,” Halverson said. “We have to be conscious of the need for employees to have time off and those kinds of

things. Right now, we’ve put together a schedule where we’re able to do that and so we’re definitely in a better place than we were six months ago, but we have room to grow, too.”

Conversations about consolidating Astoria and Seaside’s dispatch centers are ongoing.

Sheriff Matt Phillips, who has advocated for consolidation, has said that the temporary merger demonstrated the model can work. He believes a single countywide 911 dispatch center would be in the best interests of the public and emergency responders.

Over the years, sep-

arate studies that analyzed emergency dispatch in the county encouraged consolidation. The studies suggested a single center could maximize staffing and resources, improve call times and enhance coordination.

Phillips said a team has been assembled that represents the police and fire agencies from around Clatsop County to determine what consolidated dispatch could look like.

The group meets twice a month, and are working on what the governance structure might look like, the sheriff said. Most of the consolidated dispatch centers formed under intergovernmental agreements have two boards and an executive director, Phillips said, adding that the group is drilling down on the roles and authorities.

“This is a major project that will take significant time,” the sheriff said. “Once the process is complete we will be able to determine if consolidation provides better service to the citizens and the public safety users than our current system.”

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