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Tacoma, Seattle ports agree to talk about agreeing



PETER CALLAGHAN

The cooperative agreement between the ports of Tacoma and Seattle that was announced last week is either a pretty big deal that will benefit taxpayers and the economy of the state of Washington or, by window dressing to distract those who have tired of the ports' noxious competition.

The answer depends on what the two ports and their leaders do since their request to share information gets the go-ahead from the federal government. The deal, after all, isn't an agreement to agree. It only is an agreement to talk about agreeing.

And even though the proposal to the Federal Maritime Commission states that the two rivals want the CR to share all sorts of important information including rates of return, terminal rates, charges, leases and contracts with shipping lines, this too may be less than it appears.

That list of discussion points only lets the two know the parameters of what might be shared. It doesn't commit the two public agencies to actually do that transaction. And even if they do agree to open their books to the other — it perhaps finally settles the debate over whether Tacoma was giving away the farm when capturing shipping lines from Seattle — they promise to do it all "without adversely affecting interport competition."

SOUTH SOUND

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DOWNTOWN TACOMA

'Not small' losses mean grocer will close

It's a business decision based on four factors, store operator says

BY KATHLEEN COOPER Staff writer

The Tacoma City Center, the first full-service grocery store in the downtown core in decades, will close in the next few weeks, the store's landlord said Wednesday.

Employees of the store at 1250 Pacific Ave. were notified Wednesday, said Dan Patman, who is one of the owners of Pacific Plaza, where the store is located. Customers and the public will see signs about the closure Thursday.

Store operator Tyler Myers said he had no regrets about the store's closure. The only reason the store closed was that there wasn't enough sales volume. It operated at a loss the entire time, and his company made an investment of several hundred thousand dollars. It was time to make a business decision, he said.

"Maybe we're five years too early," he said. "We put together the best store we could. I did think (sales were) increasing in the right direction. It's at a point where it's not meeting last enough, and I don't see how that will change." Myers said.

The store employs 18 people including the manager, he said. His company will want to place them in other stores. The nation's biggest food retailer, in fact, was down when the picket ended, Myers said.

FOYALLOTT

Woman honored; she found \$8,700

BY KATH FLOG Staff writer

Finding thousands of dollars in a parking lot could be the ultimate temptation for some people.

But not for Suzanne Huchings. The Pierce County resident did what she thought was right after finding a bank bag filled with \$10 and \$100 bills last year.

Huchings was honored Tuesday night at the Puyallup City Council meeting for her role in returning a frantic citizen with about \$8,700.

Puyallup Police Chief Bryan Jeter presented Huchings with a plaque and the chief's coin, a token of recognition from the department, for displaying honesty.

"Not a lot of people would have done this," Jeter said. "This was really an amazing act of integrity on her part."

Huchings was leaving Scooter's Warehouse in Puyallup on Dec. 18 when she found the bag on the ground in the parking lot, according to a memo from Puyallup Police Department.

She called police and turned the money over to an officer.

An officer filed a report, a distraught woman approached and explained that she had lost her life savings. The woman described the exact amount of money and another item in the bag, the memo states.

Huchings' actions were responsible for returning the money to its rightful owner, Jeter said during Tuesday's meeting.

Huchings chose not to speak about the recognition Tuesday and quietly slipped out of the council chamber following the presentation.

"She's a very humble person, so you can't tell," Jeter said.

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CORRECTIONS

A query in Friday's GO section listed an incorrect phone number for South FET's Bob's Burgers and Buns. The correct number is 253-268-0496.

Accuracy is important to us at The News Tribune. If you notice an error in our reporting, please email us at news@newstribune.com or call 252-597-8822.

REELING THEM IN



Zach Coody, a janitor at Eastern Washington University and a member of the school's Sportsmen Club, practices target leading Wednesday at the club's chapter event at the Washington Sportsman's Show at the Washington State Fairgrounds in Puyallup. The club members routinely in casting and sportsmen competitions and will be at the show through Sunday helping anglers work on their techniques.

SEATTLE TUNNEL

3-foot object stuck in Bertha

BY MIKE BARKER The Associated Press

Crews have found a hard object more than 3 feet wide lodged in the tunneling machine that's stalled 60 feet under the city of Seattle, officials said Wednesday.

The large object is either a boulder or a piece of concrete that got stuck within the massive spooler of the machine called Bertha, said state Department of Transportation spokeswoman Laura Newborn.

Crews have also found metal and plastic piping in the machine but have not concluded what exactly has been causing problems for the machine.

"None of these things in and of themselves is enough to slow the machine down," Newborn said.

Tunneling has been halted since early December, an early setback in a \$3.1-billion project to replace the Alaskan Way Viaduct along the Seattle waterfront.

Newborn said geophysical investigations are continuing. The hydrostatic work involves pumping air into the chamber to stabilize the ground in front of the tunneling machine, allowing crews to work safely there.

Crews temporarily lost air pressure in the chamber in recent days and spent Sunday re-establishing pressure. The results of the inspection will be reviewed by a state tunneling operation task force.

Bertha is designed to easily handle rocks under 3 feet in size because the machine is large enough to simply consume those objects. Larger boulders could be crushed by the front of the machine as it moves forward, but workers also can break apart problematic rocks.

Officials have said the machine ran into an 8-inch diameter metal pipe that had been left in the ground in 2002.

Mom plans vigil for missing Teekah Lewis

BY STACIA GLENN Staff writer

It's been 15 years since someone attached Teekah Lewis' name to a sign where her family was bowling, but her mother hasn't stopped fighting to bring her home.

Teekah was 20 when she disappeared Jan. 23, 1999, from the now-closed New Frontier Lanes on Center Street in Tacoma. Though police have continued to work the case over the years, they are no closer to figuring out what happened to the little-known 17-year-old with an infectious smile.

Her mother, Theresa Lewis, believes her daughter is still alive. She will hold the annual candlelight vigil Thursday night in the place she last saw Teekah alley to remind the community that her daughter remains missing.

"It's the only person out there who's going to bring her home," said Lewis, who is striving to become a private investigator so she can help find missing children. "I have to do it."



TEEKAH LUIS

See TEKRAU, A7

ORAHAM

2 in critical condition after fiery DUI crash

BY STACIA GLENN Staff writer

Two men were in critical condition Wednesday after the car they were riding in launched into a tree and caught fire in Graham, according to the Pierce County Sheriff's Department.

The accident happened just after 2 a.m. at 76th Street East and 221st Street East.

The driver who turned 71 earlier this week, admitted to having three shots and four beers before getting behind the wheel, sheriff's spokesman Ed Troyer said.

The driver was traveling north on 20th Avenue East and trying to get his Chevy Aveo up to 100 miles per hour when the car went airborne, slammed into a tree and caught fire, Troyer said.

Firefighters quickly doused the flames and dived a passenger trapped inside. The three men in the car were taken to area hospitals. Both passengers are in critical condition; the driver was said to have moderate injuries.

Detectives will forward the case to prosecutors, who could charge the driver with vehicular assault, state officials said.