

# CAMAS-WASHOUGAL POST-RECORD

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## ‘INAPPROPRIATE LANGUAGE’

### Probe: Students likely directed foul yells at Benson players

By **KELLY MOYER**  
Post-Record staff writer

An independent investigator concluded this week that Camas High School students likely directed “some sort of inappropriate language” toward members of a visiting Portland basketball team in December 2021, but added it is “not possible to reach a definitive conclusion that (Camas

students used) racial slurs.” The investigation began in mid-December, after Eric Knox, coach of the Benson High School girls basketball team and the founder and executive director of the Portland nonprofit HOLLA, lodged an official complaint with the Camas School District, alleging that students seated in the Camas High School student section had directed racial slurs, including the “N-word” toward his

Benson players. “During the (junior varsity) game, my varsity players, who sat next to the Camas student section, expressed to me that the student section had hurled racial slurs to and about my Benson players, specifically the ‘N-word,’” Knox wrote in his complaint. “I assured them that I had their back and that, unfortunately, racism is a fact and reality for us, and that they will

have to navigate this the rest of their lives.”

Knox said his players continued to hear racial slurs coming from students in the Camas section throughout the Dec. 10 game at Camas High School.

“Additionally, Benson parents came to me and said they heard people in the Camas student section using very derogatory

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## Port permits peeve users

Marina users say they will see extreme cost increases if Port nixes annual pass

By **DOUG FLANAGAN**  
Post-Record staff writer

Unhappy with the Port of Camas-Washougal’s recent decision to eliminate annual launch ramp permits, a group of outspoken Parker’s Landing Marina users said this week they are optimistic they can change the Port commissioners’ minds.

During the Port’s remote meeting on Jan. 19, a group of Clark County residents who regularly use the launch ramp along the Washougal waterfront asked Port commissioners to reinstate the annual permit with a modest fee increase.

The following day, on Jan. 20, the Columbia River chapter of the Northwest Steelheaders group wrote in a Facebook post: “With continued support, (we) believe we can persuade the commissioners to reinstate the annual pass program.”

Port commissioners Larry Keister, Cassi Marshall and John Spencer declined to make any final decisions on the matter during their meeting on Jan. 19, citing a desire to collect more information. Instead, the commissioners asked Port staff to generate a list of recommendations and agreed to vote on the issue during the next Port Commission meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 2.

“We’ve soaked up all of this input, and we’ve received a lot of written and telephone input, and I think everybody has a better understanding of the operational needs and why these changes were proposed in the first place,” Marshall said. “We received some really thoughtful input, suggestions and ideas and examples of what other ports are doing, and that’s really appreciated.”

Port commissioners agreed to eliminate the annual permits during their June 16, 2021, meeting. Instead, users would have to pay a \$7 daily fee every time they want to launch their boat from the marina’s ramps. Before this, the Port had offered annual passes for \$50 – and for \$35 for seniors.

Many marina users who

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## Upping al fresco



PHOTOS BY KELLY MOYER/POST-RECORD

Chuck and Janessa Stoltz stand on the back patio of their Camas business, Acorn & the Oak, on Friday, Jan. 21, 2022.

## Camas restaurant may take outdoor dining to new level

Their hopes of building a covered patio stymied by the city, Acorn & the Oak owners seek a more creative solution: rooftop dining

By **KELLY MOYER**  
Post-Record staff writer

Chuck and Janessa Stoltz, the owners of Camas’ unique, Lacamas Lake-adjacent Acorn & the Oak restaurant, had already weathered more than their fair share of hurdles when the city’s planning manager emailed another piece of bad news earlier this month: the city could not approve the couple’s plans to build a permanent cover over their back patio.

The Stoltzes had been excited by the idea of being able to keep their diners warm and cozy no matter the season – and had already talked at length with city staff about the idea and spent money on an engineer and architect to come up with a covered patio design that would of-

fer Lacamas Lake views and be a natural addition to the eclectic, flower-filled Acorn & the Oak.

“The (city) let us go a couple months and we got so excited,” Janessa Stoltz said. “We spent thousands on the plans, so it’s frustrating to get to that point.”

Camas Planning Manager Robert Maul told the couple their “proposed patio cover, while very tastefully designed, is essentially a building addition and not temporary in nature and also triggers several building and land-use permits.”

The Stoltzes were, by this point, used to setbacks. The couple had purchased the former Lakeside Chalet building, at 3533 N.E. Everett St., in February 2019, and jumped through permitting hoops for

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Chuck Stoltz, co-owner of Acorn & the Oak, demonstrates how, during warmer weather, servers can wait on diners through windows that look out to Lacamas Lake on Friday, Jan. 21, 2022.

## Camas mill clean up ‘will take a lot of time’



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO COURTESY OF THE DOWNTOWN CAMAS ASSOCIATION

An aerial view shows the Georgia-Pacific paper mill in downtown Camas, along the Columbia River.

Community advisory group meets with consultants, lays groundwork for outreach

By **KELLY MOYER**  
Post-Record staff writer

Camas-area residents eager to see environmental cleanup work being done at the Georgia-Pacific (GP) paper mill site will likely need to settle for “later rather than sooner.”

“The timing of these things vary greatly, but I think we all need to get into the mindset that it’s going to take a lot of time for this to happen,” Alan

Hughes, a principal geologist with the Vancouver-based Maul Foster & Alongi consulting group, told members of a community advisory group formed to help guide public participation during the first stages of the state’s environmental cleanup plan for the historic downtown Camas paper mill, on Thursday, Jan. 13. “We are at the beginning stages ... and it isn’t always linear.”

David Ripp, the executive director of the Port of Camas-Washougal, and one of three elected officials taking part in the newly formed community advisory group, asked Hughes if the consultants had a general timeline of the cleanup process.

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C-W basketball teams among state’s best  
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Janessa Stoltz, co-owner of Acorn & the Oak, arranges flowers in the Camas-based flower shop and Midwest supper club-inspired restaurant on Friday, Jan. 21, 2022.



Chuck Stoltz, co-owner of Acorn & the Oak, stands behind the bar inside the Camas restaurant-flower shop, located along the shores of Lacamas Lake off Northeast Everett Street, on Friday, Jan. 21, 2022.



Chuck Stoltz shakes cocktails at his Camas business, Acorn & the Oak, on Friday, Jan. 21, 2022.

## Dining:

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months before beginning a major revamp of the building's interior. By March 2020, the couple had transformed the business into a lush, flower-filled, Midwest supper club-inspired retreat along Camas' Lacamas Lake. And then the pandemic hit.

The Stoltzes rolled with the punches — serving what Janessa called “the prettiest and most delicious takeout in town” during the height of the pandemic shutdowns in 2020; renting expensive tents to provide outdoor dining in 2020 and 2021; strictly enforcing mask mandates when they could finally open in-person dining; throwing up their lakeview windows during the nice-weather months to bring more fresh air into the restaurant; and simply, as the couple wrote on their business' website, “thriving in a COVID world with a skeleton crew of dedicated and talented humans making magic despite the chaos.”

Their hard work paid off. The Acorn & the Oak has gained a loyal customer base and regularly attracts visitors from out of town — and from across the country.

“We have a ton of regulars, which is really cool, but we get a lot of new people, too,” Janessa Stoltz said. “We even have regulars from across the river, from Portland and Gresham.”

And while many customers feel comfortable eating inside during the pandemic, the Stoltzes said they know they have loyal patrons who will not eat inside but might feel safe dining outdoors. Being able to offer a covered back patio — one that would have had plenty of fresh air but still provided a shelter during the rainy season and warmth on chilly nights — would have been a perfect addition to the Acorn & the Oak, Janessa Stoltz said.

“It would have been beautiful,” she said. “We've had tents, but they're so bad in the snow and the Gorge winds we get are tough on the tents.”

Plus, Chuck Stoltz added, nobody really loves to dine inside a tent.

“Nobody would sit in it,” he said of the rented outdoor tents. “This year, we did a three-month rental and paid about \$11,000 for propane (heaters) and we might get one person a night out there. Unless it's mandated, nobody wants to be in the tent.”

The Lakeside Chalet — the restaurant that operated in the same spot as the Acorn & the Oak for several decades before closing in February 2019 — offered outdoor dining on a back patio the business' owners had leased from the city of Camas.

When the Stoltzes purchased the property in 2019, they understood they would need to re-negotiate a lease for the lakeside patio. Later, the couple would discover they owned less of the patio than they'd realized — and that nearly 90 percent was actually part of an easement with the city that the previous owners had paid around \$100 a year to use. The Stoltzes knew they would likely have to pay the city another fee to use the patio space, but didn't realize until earlier this month, after Maul emailed them, that the patio also is within the city's shoreline jurisdiction, which has very limited uses.

To build a permanent covered patio, Maul told the restaurant owners, they would need to apply for a conditional-use permit and go through an extensive process that would ultimately go before the Washington Department of Ecology.

“In my experience, I believe that this type of project may run into some resistance from the state,” Maul told the Stoltzes in an email. “In order to even apply for the permit you would need city authorization, and we don't see that as an option here.”

After hearing the city's disappointing news, Janessa Stoltz posted her frustration on the business' Facebook page and thanked loyal Acorn & the Oak fans for their continued support.

“What a rough start to a new year,” Janessa wrote in the Facebook post. “Honestly, sometimes we won-



A flower arrangement sits on a table at the Camas-based Acorn & the Oak on Friday, Jan. 21, 2022. The restaurant-flower shop opened in 2020, and has gained a loyal following in-person and online.

der how many more hits we can take, and whether it's worth it. I don't mean financially (we've been so careful there) but emotionally. It's so hard when you consistently approach challenges with positive energy, boundless creativity and hard-thought strategy, only to be thwarted again and again.”

Still, Janessa wrote in the Facebook post, she and her husband had decided to count their blessings in 2022.

“Where we are poor in support from the City, we are rich in support from the community,” she wrote. “And when we feel beaten down by the external forces that make this place so hard to run, we are buoyed by our incredible team that keeps daily operations going, allowing Chuck and I to go off and fight bigger battles.”



Chuck Stoltz, co-owner of Acorn & the Oak, walks into the restaurant-flower shop on Friday, Jan. 21, 2022. Stoltz and his wife, Janessa Stoltz (not pictured) hope to build a partially covered outdoor dining area on the roof of their Camas business.

Indeed, the Stoltzes have now decided to approach their outdoor seating problem from a new angle — one a bit higher in the sky.

“We had the contractor come back and we would like to do a rooftop patio,” Janessa Stoltz told The Post-Record last week. “We are hoping the city will work with us on that. It's 100-percent on our property.”

The Acorn & the Oak building is L-shaped, with

the restaurant and flower shop taking up the entire first-floor footprint. The Stoltzes live in an apartment space over half of the building and hope to build a covered outdoor rooftop patio on top of the one-story portion of the building.

“The patio wouldn't be as tall as our building, so I don't think we would have issues there,” Janessa Stoltz said. The only issue might be the staircase.”

The couple said they're

a little nervous about approaching the city after having their covered patio idea plans shot down, but are still dreaming of a partially covered rooftop patio in full bloom, where customers who want to enjoy the Acorn & the Oak's craft cocktails and Midwest supper club-inspired menu outdoors can do so in comfort nearly year-round.

“We're definitely going to pursue it,” Janessa Stoltz said. “But we're nervous about it because our last interaction with the city was not a very good one.”

The Stoltzes still have hope that 2022 will be an easier year for their fledgling business. As Janessa Stoltz wrote in her Facebook post, which garnered dozens of positive responses from fans of Acorn & the Oak: “We trust that everything will turn out in the end.”

To learn more about Acorn & the Oak, visit [acornandtheoak.com](http://acornandtheoak.com) or check out the business' social media sites on Facebook (@acornandtheoak) and Instagram.

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