

Views from the Rock

How 'institutional' knowledge shapes a city

CANNON SHOTS

R.J. MARX



The League of Oregon Cities hosted its City Hall Week in September. Participating were 256 city officials, 83 cities, 25 legislators, 31 candidates and 59 citizens. Of their four legislative priorities — property tax reform, restoring recreational immunity, transportation funding and state employee pension reform — not one of these was raised in a Cannon Beach City Council candidate forum on Oct. 12. The city's priorities remain as separate and iconic as its geography.

Candidates Brandon Ogilvie, Herb Florer and Nancy McCarthy focused on the unique characteristics of a city where 1,500 residents play host to 750,000 guests. They pointed to crowded city streets, a lack of parking options and a dearth of housing for local employees, especially those in the service sector.

While the unity of the candidates fell short of a kumbaya moment, there were a few jobs thrown at city staff and the Cannon Beach Chamber of Commerce.

The chamber's role as a function of city government was debated and city officials were accused of lacking "institutional memory."

Staff, council disconnect?

When a city manager, city planner, public works director and police chief all left at the same time, changes came in the city's management style, sometimes discomfiting older residents and leaving newer ones without a road map.

"We've lost a lot of institutional knowledge," Ogilvie said. "It's up to us and the people on the City Council to try to keep the character that this town has developed and built and ensure that it stays the way we would like it rather than be changed by someone else governing the city that just didn't have the understanding and knowledge of those who previously occupied those jobs."

Part of the problem is that some city staff either do not live in Cannon Beach or cannot afford to do so.

"We've had such a huge change in management," McCarthy said. "Some of the city officials that have been hired in the past few years should go out and get to know the community."

Florer said relationships between City Council, city management and citizens could be improved via better communication. The City Council has a duty to "guide and monitor the city staff," he said.

Forum moderator Andrew Tonry pointed out sections of Tolovana Park were omitted from the recent Citizen Survey because officials were unaware the community was part of Cannon Beach.

Chamber role

Candidates had differing expectations for the chamber and its role in the community. How much tourism is too much, and how much should be spent on promotion?

"We have to decide if we want to maintain a small village arts atmosphere that we have or if we're going to become a high-end destination resort," McCarthy said.

"I'd like to see us preserve our village atmosphere," she said. "The biggest challenge for me will be clinging to the small-town feel — especially in a world of encroaching national events. I think Cannon Beach is at a crossroads right now."



Herb Florer, Nancy McCarthy and Brandon Ogilvie at the Oct. 12 forum.

R.J. MARX/CANNON BEACH GAZETTE



Pondering the city's future in 1977.



Council candidates in 1988. Councilors, like staff, offer an insight into the city's "institutional memory." George Vetter, lower right, is a current council member.



The role of the Cannon Beach Chamber of Commerce has evolved throughout the years.

City councilors will be expected to build a new institutional memory that matches the colorful, historic small-town past with today's Cannon Beach international brand.

There is no longer an off-season, McCarthy said, and "some of the tourism that we have today is diluting the community spirit that we have all known for so long."

Florer identified the divergent goals between drawing tourists and managing local infrastructure. "My biggest issue is the influx of people as our community has grown," Florer said, citing limited parking and traffic jams.

"I'm conflicted at almost all times — but it's what we are," Ogilvie said. "I think the best we can do to welcome people to this town and at the same time try to create an atmosphere that is workable for those of us that live here."

What we hear the candidates saying is they want to take a fresh look at the relationship the city and chamber of commerce and a determination that this is the best formula

for the city. The city needs to clarify the chamber's roles and objectives, complicated by the state's unique tourism fund distribution rules.

Maybe the state transient lodging tax — 70 percent of the new .8 percent tax increase goes to "putting heads in beds" — is something to be discussed not only locally but at the League of Oregon Cities and in Salem.

Why can't a larger portion of those funds go to city infrastructure needs — like replacing the Fir Street bridge — that would not only benefit residents, but potentially save the lives of visitors in the event of an earthquake and tsunami?

Instilling confidence

Whichever candidates prevail, there needs to be enhanced communication between council, residents and staff.

The divide could play out on a number of issues — be it transition of the e-prep committee from volunteer to staff support, action on resident survey results, commission and board decisions and more.

As long as residents feel a disconnect from their city officials, the sense of community and small-town values — the institutional memory — invoked by Florer, McCarthy and Storer will never truly be instilled. A 35-percent confidence rating in city government as indicated in the city survey is not high enough.

In Cannon Beach, city councilors will be expected to build a new institutional memory that matches the colorful, historic small-town past with today's Cannon Beach international brand.

Accomplishing that will require more than a village, it will require a vision.

After fall fest, looking forward to a season of author visits

First of all, library friends, we would like to thank each and every one of you for your contributions to our wonderful Fall Festival. So many of you baked, produced crafts, manned the cash registers, and came up with awesome ideas to make our Festival the warm and profitable event it was! And thanks to our local businesses who provided gift certificates and to the hotels who came forward with special deals on rooms for our silent auction. Best of all, thanks to all of you who came to the festival to make purchases, drink coffee, and just spend a while enjoying one another and the items we had available!

Hard to believe, but October is drawing to a close, and soon it will be November! But never fear, the Cannon Beach Library will help us get through that blustery month. The first library event will be our monthly membership meeting, which will be held on Wednesday, Nov. 2. Our hostesses will provide a delicious brunch, we will have a short business meeting, and then enjoy what should be an interesting presentation by Patrick Lathrop from the Coaster Theatre.

AT THE LIBRARY CARLA O'REILLY



Our first "World of Haystack Rock" lecture for 2016-17 is scheduled for Wednesday, Nov. 9, from 7 to 8:30 p.m. Wayne Hoffman, Policy Director for Mid Coast Watershed Council, will be on hand to give what should be a very interesting and informative lecture. His lecture is entitled: "Peregrine Falcons of Yaquina Head."

The Northwest Author Series will continue at 2 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 12. Author Carolyn Wood will be present to talk about her book Tough Girl: An Olympian's Journey. In the summer of her high school Freshman year, she became a competitive swimmer who actually proceeded to the 1960 Olympics in Rome, where she won a gold medal. This native Oregonian swam competitively for three more years and then attended the University

of Oregon. She taught English for 35 years and finally decided to write about her own experiences. Her books will be available for purchase, and the event is free of charge, as always.

Finally for the month of November, Cannon Beach Reads will meet at the library at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, Nov. 16, to discuss the book they will have read for the month, which is "Death Comes for the Archbishop," by author Willa Cather. Linda Schaeffer will be discussion leader for the evening. The group always encourages new members to attend!

Also, library friends, keep in mind that during and after Thanksgiving, our well-stocked craft table will return for early Christmas shopping. Quilt drawing tickets will continue to be sold for the month of November for the drawing in early December, when the ticket of the lucky winner will be drawn at our holiday tea. Also, the library will be an important participant in Haystack Holidays starting Nov. 25. More news to follow!

We would like to wish one and all of you a very happy Halloween!



Kathe Leduc and Judy Wood dressed up for Halloween 2015.

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CANNON BEACH GAZETTE
The Cannon Beach Gazette is published every other week by EO Media Group.
1555 N. Roosevelt, Seaside, Oregon 97138
503-738-5561 • Fax 503-738-9285
www.cannonbeachgazette.com • email: editor@cannonbeachgazette.com

SUBSCRIPTION RATES:
Annually: \$40.50 in county, \$58.00 in and out of county.
Postage Paid at: Cannon Beach, OR 97110
POSTMASTER:
Send address changes to Cannon Beach Gazette, P.O. Box 210, Astoria, OR 97103
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