

# Fire district to invest in new equipment, volunteers

By Brenna Visser  
Cannon Beach Gazette

The Cannon Beach Rural Fire Protection District is focused on saving money for future upgrades in next fiscal year's proposed budget.

Along with a new fire engine, nozzles and other apparatus, the fire district may add a recruitment officer to improve volunteer retention and add more paid, part-time firefighter positions.

This is Fire Chief Matt Benedict's first budget cycle to oversee, and he said his goal is to help "standardize and streamline" the budgeting process for the district to clarify why each item is needed to the public.

"We're setting this budget up for the future," Benedict said. "We are saving money for when our apparatus need to be replaced to be fiscally responsible."

Recruiting and keeping qualified volunteer firefighters is a task that is becoming increasingly more challenging

not only for Cannon Beach, but for volunteer departments around the country, Benedict said. According to the National Fire Protection Association, the number of volunteers decreased 12 percent from 1985 to 2015.

To help with retention, Benedict is proposing to add \$39,000 to the budget for more part-time firefighter positions. It would be structured so that existing volunteers could sign up for two, 10-hour paid shifts a week at \$15 an hour. Seaside Fire Department already has a similar program.

Right now the fire district has 18 volunteers, which Benedict said is adequate for now. Ideally, he hopes to recruit to reach a total between 25 and 30.

"Volunteers who signed up for shifts would get more experience working beside me and others to know how to run a fire station. They need to know how it runs in case something happens to me," Benedict said. "It'll give them more confidence, more one-on-one attention — I see it as a win-win."



Fire Chief Matt Benedict

Benedict said he also hopes the extra cash will help ease the financial burdens of his volunteers.

"Anything I can do to help my volunteers be more financially stable," Benedict said.

Benedict is also proposing to apply for a four-year, \$728,150 grant to fund a new recruitment officer. The funds would help pay the officer's salary, as well as training and outreach materials to develop a long-term strategy to find and keep volunteers.

Lack of affordable hous-

ing and the high cost of living are two main reasons Benedict identified as major issues contributing to recruitment struggles.

"It's definitely a trickle-down effect," he said.

About \$85,000 is proposed to be transferred into a reserve fund for the eventual replacement of a 1995 fire engine set to expire in the next few years, and will eventually cost around \$400,000. Fire nozzles and self-contained breathing apparatus equipment will need to be replaced before expiring in

2019, and the district intends to secure a grant to foot a bill that could push \$500,000.

The National Fire Protection Association stipulates that engines need to be cycled every 20 years to keep insurance rates low for the city.

For this fiscal year, the district is also hoping to secure grants to hopefully replace the fire engine at Arch Cape and 35 radios for all personnel, Cannon Beach Fire Division Chief Marc Reckmann said, though exact estimates haven't been exacted yet.

"All of our radios we have are obsolete. It's getting to the point where it's hard to find replacement parts for them," Reckmann said.

Law enforcement and the fire team have had longstanding issues with radio communications in southern Clatsop County, Reckmann said. This is mostly due to hilly geography, outdated technology and too few repeaters in the area that help convey signals to dispatch in Seaside, he said.

Cannon Beach Police De-

partment has also proposed about \$8,000 in the city budget to fund new radios and a new repeater. Benedict said the two departments are starting conversations about coordinating the efforts.

"These radios are our lifeline to the outside world," Benedict said. "There's been close calls in certain remote areas, and we need to be able to get out if a situation turns upside down."

As for Arch Cape's engine, Reckmann said the current one is functional but is not as adequate as it should be to accommodate some of the off road needs of that community.

Grants are becoming more competitive, Reckmann said, which puts small communities like Cannon Beach behind the needs of larger metro areas when it comes to replacing infrastructure.

"I hope to get some other surrounding communities on board so we can apply for a regional grant — then I think we'll have better chances," Reckmann said.

## Free admission to state parks

The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department invites people to stay and play for free to celebrate State Parks Day on Saturday, June 3.

Camping will be free the night of June 3 in all RV hookup sites, tent sites and horse camps. Day-use parking will be free both June 3 and 4 at the 26 parks that charge a day-use fee.

People can reserve online at [www.oregonstateparks.org](http://www.oregonstateparks.org) or by calling 800-452-5687. Phone reservations must be made by 5 p.m. June 2. The campsite rental will be free, but all reservations will still include an \$8 non-refundable transaction fee. Of the 46 state park campgrounds, 56 take reservations.

State Parks Day is always the first Saturday in June. The Oregon State Legislature established the free day in 1997 to focus public attention on Oregon's state park system.

Parks around the state will hold special events on June 3. Silver Falls State Park east of Salem will hold its annual foot races. The Silver Falls Challenge includes a 5K, six-mile run and a kids' 1,500-meter run.

Detroit Lake State Park will offer free hot dogs, a visit from parks mascot JR Beaver, and Junior Ranger programs for the kids.

Four parks in the Bend area, Tumalo, LaPine, Prineville and Cove Palisades, will hold geology

hikes or presentations that weekend.

Detroit Lake will also participate in the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Free Fishing Weekend. Visitors will be able to fish, crab and clam without a license June 3-4 at parks around the state. ODFW will provide the gear, bait and instructions.

Other state parks offering free fishing include Benson State Recreation Area in the Columbia River Gorge, Fort Stevens State Park near Astoria, and Champeog State Heritage Site north of Salem. For a complete list of parks with fishing events go to [www.dfw.state.or.us/education/angling/free\\_fishing.asp](http://www.dfw.state.or.us/education/angling/free_fishing.asp).

### PUBLIC MEETINGS

**Tuesday, June 6**  
Cannon Beach City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

**Monday, June 12**  
Cannon Beach Rural Fire Department Board, 6 p.m., Fire-Rescue Main Station, 188 Sunset Ave.

**Tuesday, June 13**  
Cannon Beach Public Works Committee, 9 a.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

**Cannon Beach City Council**, 5:30 p.m., work session, City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

**Thursday, June 15**  
Cannon Beach Parks and Community Services Committee, 9 a.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

**Cannon Beach Design Review Board**, 6 p.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

**Tuesday, June 20**  
Cannon Beach Public Works

Committee, 9 a.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

**Thursday, June 22**  
Cannon Beach Planning Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

**Friday, June 30**  
Cannon Beach Emergency Preparedness Committee, 10 a.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

**Tuesday, July 11**  
Cannon Beach City Council, 7 p.m., meeting and work session, City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

**Tuesday, July 18**  
Cannon Beach Public Works Committee, 9 a.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

**Thursday, July 20**  
Cannon Beach Parks and Community Services Committee, 9 a.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

**Thursday, July 27**  
Cannon Beach Planning Commis-

sion, 6 p.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

**Friday, July 28**  
Cannon Beach Emergency Preparedness Committee, 10 a.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

**Tuesday, Aug. 1**  
Cannon Beach City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

**Tuesday, Aug. 8**  
Cannon Beach City Council, 5:30 p.m., work session, City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

**Tuesday, Aug. 15**  
Cannon Beach Public Works Committee, 9 a.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

**Thursday, Aug. 17**  
Cannon Beach Parks and Community Services Committee, 9 a.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

**Cannon Beach Design Review Board**, 6 p.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

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