

# Academy's request goes to Planning Commission

Academy from Page 1A

the city's strategic plan had designated as a future location for affordable housing.

If the council did not approve these negotiations, the charter school would not have been able to open in the fall.

While details have yet to be discussed, the plan is to sign a three-year lease, which is the amount of time academy board members expect to outgrow the space. As a way to strike a compromise, Mayor Sam Steidel — a longtime supporter of the charter school — suggested whatever is agreed upon as rent would go toward funding affordable housing in Cannon Beach.

The academy's request will still need to go before the Planning Commission later this month, before moving ahead on any physical changes to the

space prior to the opening in the fall.

## A long road

Although establishing the academy in Cannon Beach has been in the works for more than four years, the last-minute need to find a new location came when the board received an estimate of \$150,000 over the \$90,000 they budgeted for construction costs at the original location on Sunset Boulevard.

Costs were driven up because the space would need to be renovated extensively to meet state school fire codes, board member Phil Simmons said.

When the board originally submitted their charter school plans to Seaside School District two years ago, the Children's Center was not available, Simmons said, but is cheaper and

## 'Having a school in Cannon Beach will bring families back to town.'

Amy Moore,  
executive director of Cannon Beach Academy

already up to code for a school standards.

"I'm just really proud of the community. We've had so many hurdles, and we get knocked down, but we always get back up again," Simmons said. "We understand we came late to this council with this, so I'm glad they saw good use of the land."

Alaina Giguere, who has been involved with getting the school started since it closed in 2013, saw all of the roadblocks almost as a type of destiny.

"The children's center is the perfect place for our school," Giguere said to the council. "I believe in my heart all the

delays we've faced these past years have lead us here. That building is full of love, and full of learning. Please don't let everyone's work be in vain."

A number of folks also submitted written testimony in the hopes of persuading councilors.

"Every time I walk by the former Cannon Beach Elementary, my heart feels sad for the whole community," Janet and Frank Patrick wrote to city councilors.

During Moore's speech to the council she argued that affordable housing and the elementary school could coexist.

"Having a school in Cannon

Beach will bring families back to town. We need the heartbeat of our town back," Moore said.

## A chicken-before-the-egg situation

Some in the community had hesitations about giving up one of the few locations the town has to feasibly build affordable housing.

Councilor Nancy McCarthy ultimately voted for lease negotiations, but questioned the logic that having an elementary school would naturally bring young families back to Cannon Beach.

"Which comes first? You're not necessarily going to get students with affordable housing options," McCarthy said. "You have a school that attracts families: where are they going to live?"

A key factor in the decision

for her and Councilor Mike Benefield was that the situation was temporary.

"My initial reaction was 'we don't have enough options for affordable housing,'" McCarthy said. "But the idea that the school was already anticipating reaching capacity (at the end of three years) made me more comfortable."

City Manager Brant Kucera also has mentioned conflicts between the city's goal to build 25 affordable homes by July 2018 and letting the school use this property.

"The citizen survey, the affordable housing task force and strategic plan all identified affordable housing as the No. 1 priority for the city," Kucera said. "This site was critical in the plan. It's a deviation from policy — which isn't necessarily right or wrong. It's just different from six months ago."



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Raising funds for the Cannon Beach Academy.

## We want school!

Sister and brother Alexandra and Miles Dasker host a lemonade stand outside their home on Hemlock Street. While the Dasker family spend most of their days in Lake Oswego, Alexandra's mother Melissa Dasker said her daughter had the idea after seeing all of the donation buckets around downtown shops for the Cannon Beach Academy.

"She's known all about the troubles the academy has been having every time we visit, so I think she saw

it as a need." She set up shop two weeks ago on a sunny Sunday morning outside of the Cannon Beach community church, her mother said, and raised about \$30. "I think it caught her interest because she likes to work with kids, they're important to her."

Sally Steidel, a member of the academy board, received the donation and said she thought her effort was superb. "This is so special to us because of the struggle we've had to get the school started."

## Kucera will finish the city's negotiations with academy

Manager from Page 1A

Wilbur is already accustomed to taking on chief duties when he is away, he said.

Before departing in June, Kucera plans to sit down with department heads to solidify projects, as well as finish lease negotiations between the city and the Cannon Beach Academy concerning its new location at the former Children's Center on Hemlock.

The proposed plan to purchase five affordable housing units to place in the RV Resort on Elk Land Road and Haskell Lane planned for summer will be postponed to the fall most likely, Kucera said, to be under the guidance of whoever is the new city manager.

During his time in Cannon Beach, Kucera helped the city adopt its first strategic plan, which he called "the foundation we're going to need to move forward as a community." The plan was developed from a citizen survey that received a 40 percent response rate from the city's 1,700 residents.

Kucera advised whoever takes on the role next to be very physically present in the community.

"This community expects the city manager to be visible and out there in the community — more than I have been," Kucera said. "The next manager needs to recognize being active in the community is the key to their success."

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