



## New sales tax to help fund convention center growth?

An increase in lodging taxes is also proposed

By Nancy McCarthy  
Seaside Signal

A local sales tax could be imposed on all businesses throughout Seaside to help pay for a proposed expansion of the Seaside Civic and Convention Center and a new parking structure.

The sales tax also would come with a bump in local lodging taxes, said Russ Vandenberg, general manager of the convention center. Vandenberg spoke to the Seaside Chamber of Commerce at its weekly meeting Jan 30.

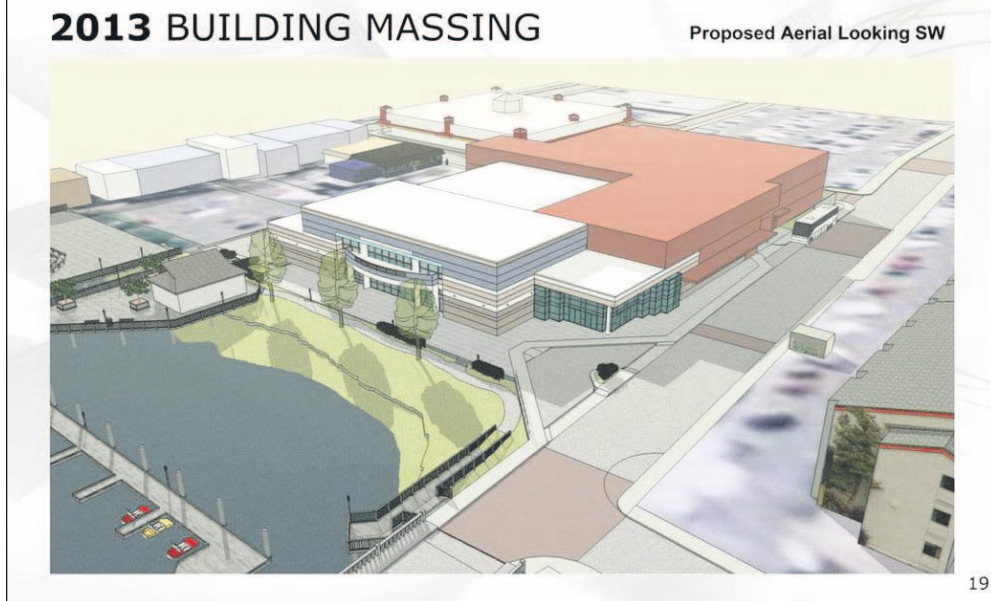
Vandenberg said the proposal will come before the Seaside City Council this year. The council would have the final say on the

expansion and the financing scheme; it will not be subject to a public vote.

A proposed \$25 million convention center expansion has been in the works for at least six years and has undergone studies by three consulting firms. The tentative design, however, would eliminate 42 parking spaces, which could be restored by construction of a parking structure, adding \$6 million to the bill, Vandenberg said.

It would cost \$200,000 a month for 30 years to pay off the debt, he said.

C.H. Johnson Consulting, which did the latest study, suggested three financing options. The first suggestion was to work with the cities of Cannon



The existing Seaside Civic and Convention Center would be expanded to the west, doubling the current space. When completed the center would have 40,000 square feet of public space.

Beach and Astoria to increase their lodging taxes

and contribute the proceeds to the convention center.

But, Vandenberg said, "I feel, realistically, that's not

going to happen."

The second option was to raise the city's 8 percent lodging tax by 6 percent. That would bring in \$2.6 million a year, about the amount needed annually. Another 1 percent in lodging taxes goes to the state.

In comparison, Vandenberg noted, Portland has a 13 percent lodging tax.

The third option was to create a 2.75 percent "business improvement district" tax that would be applied to all retail sales — including food stores and restaurants — throughout Seaside and combine it with an increased lodging tax that could reach to 5 percent. The actual figures have not been determined yet, Vandenberg said.

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## Seaside Scholarships reaches its \$50,000 goal

By Andrew R. Tonry  
For the Seaside Signal

At first, the task seemed daunting: An anonymous donor had offered Seaside Scholarships Inc. \$50,000 if the nonprofit organization could raise another \$50,000 by Jan. 15.

When it came up a few thousand dollars short of its \$50,000 fundraising goal, the deadline was extended by two weeks.

"We were thinking that there are people that don't do anything until the last minute," said Seaside Scholarships President Celine McEwan.

They were right.

As January came to a close, Seaside Scholarships was able to exceed its goal, raising over \$51,000. The funds will be added to the donor's \$50,000 contribution.

"This person thought enough of higher education that it was an impetus for us to go to Seaside and ask: 'Can we do this too?'" said McEwan.

With more than 100 individual donations — and the help of a few extra days — Seaside answered in the affirmative.

Now, with a bank account balance sporting more zeros than ever before, Seaside Scholarships Inc. is entering a new phase.

"We have to decide which percentage of what to keep to build the fund and what to give away," she said. "Now we have to be concerned with building a future for Seaside Scholarships."

Indeed, it's a new world.

"Last year we didn't have these concerns because we didn't have any money," said McEwan. The group is looking at the Astoria High School Scholarships fund as a potential model.

"The next step is to create an endowment," she added. "We have to decide where we invest so that Seaside Scholarships will be going on for the next 100 years."



NANCY MCCARTHY PHOTO

Those attending the Seaside Jazz Festival in 2014 dressed up in their jazziest outfits and danced the days — and nights — away.

## Seaside Jazz Festival can't be beat

By Andrew R. Tonry  
For the Seaside Signal

The Seaside Jazz Festival is becoming one of the longer-running events in the city's history.

Originally dubbed the Oregon Dixieland Jubilee, it's 32 years old and draws nearly 2,000 attendees each February.

Most of those — about 98 percent — are from outside the North Coast, and at least 80 percent are repeat customers, say the festival's coordinators, Ruth Johnson and Judy Shook.

"There's quite a friendly group that just meet up at jazz festivals and share what's happened to them in the last year," Johnson said.

A sense of return and reunion permeates performers this year as well. Of the 12 groups scheduled for this year's festival Feb. 19 through 22, 11 have played the festival in years past.

The lone newcomer to the Seaside Jazz Festival is Portland's Mardi Gras All-Star Band, which is also the only act from the region (with the exception of the Seaside High School jazz band).

Led by drummer and vocalist Gary Smith, the Mardi Gras All-Stars play traditional Dix-

ieland jazz. Another scheduled group, High Sierra, performs a similar brand.

"They're traditional jazz," said Johnson of High Sierra. "They play a lot of the Dixieland-style music, and they're very good at it. Most of the traditional bands have seven members. They have piano, banjo, tuba, a reed-man, trumpet, trombone and drums."

So, too, are acts at the Seaside Jazz Festival whose inspiration comes from outside the traditional sphere of early

jazz (although only by a few decades — nothing here is sourced from the 21st century).

"Tom Ridney does some blues," said Johnson. "His band will also play a waltz. He does Cajun, zydeco. He plays an electric fiddle. His band is only five members. There's guitar, bass and a piano player — and she's a boogie-woogie champion on the piano."

Johnson highlighted Dave Bennett and the Memphis Speed Kings as another group performing outside the purview of traditional jazz.

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## New owners of local radio station key on community

What once was Calcomm is now KBGE, 'The Bridge'

By Andrew R. Tonry  
For the Seaside Signal

Perhaps, while tuning your radio dial anywhere from Manzanita to Long Beach, you noticed Seaside's 94.9 FM.

Or perhaps you didn't.

For the past year 94.9 FM, with a broadcast studio in downtown Seaside and a 25,000-watt transmitter on a hill nearby, has essentially been running on auto-pilot.

The DJ was a computer. The only time a human being was in the office — let alone broadcasting live on the airwaves — was maybe once-a-week, adding songs to a playlist or performing some FCC compliance.

Living in California, the station's

owners didn't spend a lot of time in Seaside. In 2013, Cal Brady died, and his wife put the station up for sale.

Seaside's 94.9 FM was purchased in an estate sale by Mark Evans and his wife, Mickie Evans. They closed the deal in January. Mark Evans wears a shirt and tie and has a cool, affable voice familiar of radio. He's been a part of the industry for decades, both on the air and off.

"I have been working for Clear Channel radio for about 20 years," Evans said. Most recently, in San Diego, he was a news director.

"Before that, my wife and I operated a radio station in Temecula, Calif.," Evans said. "That's where we got the bug, originally. We've been looking for the possibility to run a station again, and this one became available, so we searched it



ANDREW R. TONRY PHOTO

Mark Evans, the new co-owner of Seaside's radio station 94.9 FM, will be an on-air personality. Before arriving in Seaside, Evans worked for Clear Channel in San Diego.

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