

Seaside, developers squabble over sidewalks

Requirement could undermine affordable housing

By Jack Heffernan
EO Media Group

The Seaside Planning Commission and local developers are still at odds over a sidewalk requirement for a proposed affordable housing project.

Owners of a 15-acre plot of land on the corner of South Wahanna Road and Avenue S called Blue Heron Pointe plan to build 45 homes priced under \$300,000. But the developers — Ritchie Development Corp. — have said the city's request to have a section of sidewalk built along Ave-



Aerial view of the proposed Blue Heron Pointe development.

nue S in the first phase of the project would not be feasible. Commissioners discussed the issue at a meeting Tuesday,

March 7. Concerns voiced by the commissioners and members of the public included a 2009 street system plan that

calls for sidewalks, bike lanes and foot travel lanes along Avenue S. Drainage concerns from culverts on the property and traffic caused by the lot's proximity to Seaside Heights Elementary School and a future construction site were also mentioned.

Developers presented an adjusted version of phase one of the three-phase plan Tuesday. The plan would call for a wider passageway inside Blue Heron Pointe that would allow more access from Avenue S to Wahanna Road until the exterior sidewalks eventually would be built in phase three.

Meeting attendees expressed concern, though, that developers may delay building the sidewalks if they don't collect the necessary funds after selling lots built in the first two phases of the project.

A number of commissioners proposed including a deadline to have the sidewalks built as part of any future approval. Commissioner Richard Ridout suggested the deadline could parallel the opening of a new high school in the city's East Hills in fall 2020.

"We've got no timeline here for how soon anything is going to happen, so I'd like them to put the sidewalk next to the property," Ridout said.

But Max Ritchie, one of the owners of the property, said the earliest his company could afford to build the sidewalks would be in phase three. While he doesn't know exactly when that phase would begin, it almost certainly will not be within four years, he said.

Should developers miss

the proposed deadline, the city could halt other construction on the property until the sidewalks are built, Commission Chairman Ray Romine said.

Sandra K. Gee, who lives on Cooper Street east of the property, expressed her support for the sidewalk requirement Tuesday night.

"This is a multimillion dollar project," she said. "I don't think the cost of that sidewalk on that curve will make or break it, but it gives the owners an out not to build it if they don't sell all of their houses."

Commissioners will discuss the issue further before voting on it at a public meeting on March 21.

Ritchie said he is not sure yet how the proposed requirement will affect the future of the project.

Pearl public hearing to be continued



R.J. MARX/SEASIDE SIGNAL

Owner Antoine Simmons points to the site of the proposed Pearl Oceanfront Resort.

Pearl from Page 1A

change, but also the variances that have been granted to the adjacent property," Pearl architect David Vonada said Monday night.

Dan Calef told councilors the proposed building would cast a "permanent afternoon

shadow" on his house.

"We would be perfectly willing to accept a slightly smaller unit that doesn't completely overpower our house," Calef said. "We just don't want this huge thing that would shade and block our house."

"Once again we ask you



R.J. MARX/SEASIDE SIGNAL

The height variance was essential due to the uneven driveway grade, owner Simmons said.

to vote 'no' for the height," Susan Calef said. "It's very distressing. I'm not opposed to the building. We just ask that it be built to the specifications."

Without a height variance, the building would lose two floors and be limited to 30 rooms, owner Antoine Sim-

mons said after the meeting.

"That wouldn't work," he said.

A continuance of the public hearing was granted at the recommendation of the city's legal counsel Dan Thiele. The hearing will resume at the city's April 10 council meeting.

Cannon Beach charter school gets a boost

Academy wins \$100,000 grant

By R.J. Marx
Seaside Signal

The Cannon Beach Academy received good news. The charter school, set to open its doors in September, received a recommendation for a \$100,000 award through the Oregon Charter School Program.

Funds will be allocated to curriculum costs, teacher training, classroom equipment and marketing costs, Phil Simmons, director of startup operations for the academy, said Tuesday, March 7.

"The planning grant is administered by the Oregon Department of Education and the funds came from the federal government," Simmons said. "The purpose is to help defer the startup costs for charter schools. We applied for the maximum grant amount of \$100,000, and they awarded the grant."

The Seaside School District participated in the grant process by verifying that the academy had been granted a charter to operate in the district and supported their receiving the grant to provide startup funds, Superintendent Sheila Roley said.

"The members of the Cannon Beach Academy board have worked very hard to make this a reality and we were happy that they received some resources to help them in the process," Roley said.

Charter schools

The state was awarded \$8.7 million for charter school planning, implementation and dissemination grants in October 2015, charter school grant specialist Jennifer Donovan said. "We will award up to 15, \$100,000 planning grants over the three-year term of our federal charter schools program grant," Donovan said.

So far, four planning grants have been awarded, she added.

Simmons said the grant application detailed the school's five-year planning efforts, provided budget details and indicated where funds would be allocated. All costs in the application were approved.

"It's just a matter of us executing the plan and getting reimbursed," Simmons said. "They were quite impressed with our grant, so much so they're making our application a model for future applications."

Where the money will be allocated

The largest portion of the grant funds are slated to be used for training educators in the school's curriculum. Another \$10,000 will go to three months of salaries for the director and English as a Second Language teacher. "This will really allow those two individuals to really iron out any issues with our program and prepare our program for implementation," Simmons said.

As much as \$30,000 will go to classroom equipment and curriculum expenses.

The academy applied for the grant with the assistance of the Seaside School District, a cooperation "which is not always common," Simmons said. "Oftentimes there can be friction between a charter school and a district, because the district sees the charter school as taking away a source of revenue. My experience is the district, particularly within the past year, has been incredibly supportive. They're really trying to help us pull this off."

Something 'unique'

Enrollment at Cannon Beach Academy is limited to 22 students. "It's offering something a bit unique," Simmons said.

Families not only in Cannon Beach but in Seaside,

Gearhart and other portions of Clatsop County in the Seaside School District will benefit from the school's Spanish language component and direct instruction curriculum design, he said. "If they want this curriculum, it's open to them," Simmons said. "It's great for the district. It will encourage folks to move here because of this choice, I believe."

With enrollment underway, the academy's lease agreement at 171 Sunset Boulevard is nearly complete.

Renovations include "moving a few walls and putting some paint in there," Simmons said, as well as meeting compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Improvements will begin after the lease is complete.

"We've got a budget for it and we don't anticipate any significant problems," Simmons said.

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