



Two buyers vie for school in Gearhart

By R.J. MARX
Seaside Signal

Two buyers seek ownership of the former Gearhart Elementary School property.

The potential sale comes after the school closed this year and the campus moved to the new Pacific Ridge Elementary School on Spruce Drive in Seaside, outside of the tsunami inundation zone.

Originally listed at \$1.9 million, the district lowered the price to \$1.2 million earlier this year before authorizing the sale in August at \$750,000. That deal didn't materialize.

In September, the school district approved negotiations with a bidder who requested confidentiality at the time.

At last Wednesday's Gearhart City Council meeting, potential purchasers Jeff Bodner, a general contractor, and Celeste Bodner, founder and executive director of Foster Club, proposed to repurpose and revitalize the school building as a community hub for arts and cultural activity, and as a community gathering space, and as a place for philanthropic organizations, such as Foster Club, the national organization based in Seaside she founded and where she serves as executive director.

Bodner said she envisions light renovation for the organization, dorm-style lodging to serve program purposes and also community meeting space for workshops or events hosted by collaborators or community members, or as rented event space.

Designated public-/semi-public, zoning code limits uses to a government facility, community meeting building, public service use or educational purposes.

"I'm intrigued by the idea of somebody willing to take responsibility taking over the building and having it open to public use for some fee structure, but making sure that the ball fields and playground were available to the community," City Councilor Dan Jesse said. "To me that's a pretty good win-win for everybody. I would like to see this conversation continue."

Second offer

In an electronic meeting last Monday morning, Seaside School District building committee member Brian Taylor and school board members authorized Seaside School District superintendent Susan Penrod to negotiate and execute a contract on the former elementary school property with Robert Morey and his wife Timi.

If the sale is completed, an Oregon LLC would be formed to take title to the property, Robert Morey said.

"We will be collaborating with the entire community as we determine the best long-term uses of the former elementary school property," he said.

Active initiatives taking place in Gearhart, including changes to the city's downtown commercial zone, the High Point Fire Station site, the parks master planning project and the buildable lands inventory will

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HIS BRILLIANT CAREER



Photos by City of Seaside and Seaside Police Department

ABOVE: Bruce Holt honored with a plaque from the city, presented by Mayor Jay Barber. BELOW: Holt and family members at City Hall.

Lt. Holt honored at City Council farewell

By R.J. MARX
Seaside Signal

Seaside's longest-running employee took a bow last night, as City Council commended him for 37 years of service to the police department and the city of Seaside.

"We have a special opportunity to recognize Bruce Holt, who's retiring after 37 years of service city of Seaside," announced Mayor Jay Barber. "You have shown a great deal of respect to all with whom you have come in contact with, and will be greatly missed."

With family in the audience and many more watching remotely, Holt was recognized for his commitment to the community and his professional leadership.

A video presentation offered glimpses of Holt throughout his career — usually, but not always sporting his trademark mustache.

Holt served as a reserve officer in 1982 and was hired by the Seaside Police Department in November 1983. He was promoted to senior officer in February 1987 and sergeant in 1989. He received a detective role in the mid-1990s and promotion to lieutenant in June 2016.

"Service with a smile," was his motto, whether in the station, entertaining young people in the classroom, refereeing a ball game or at a community barbecue.



Barber and councilors stressed Holt's roles as president of the Seaside Rotary, church member, and with his wife Dana, foster parents to more than 70 children over the years.

Holt played a key role in keeping alive the memory of Seaside Sgt. Jason Goodding, the officer who was killed in the line of duty in 2016.

"Every year you've been there to remind us of his service, and the fact that he paid the ultimate price of his leadership in the community," Barber said. "That's what really resonated with me. Not only your heart for Jason but for all of the guys and gals that served in the police department."

Holt now serves with the Oregon chapter of COPS, a national non-profit dedicated to the concerns of police survivors.

Holt thanked his parents for instilling a commitment to service in the community, which he promised to maintain after leaving the department.



"It's going to continue to be our pleasure to be involved," Holt said.

He thanked Chief Dave Ham for choosing him as lieutenant and the city and councilors for their support and guidance.

"Thank you on behalf of our entire family to give us the opportunity to serve this community," Holt said. "We have enjoyed it."

Councilors and staff followed with their own salutes to the lieutenant, including some who have known him for decades.

"I am lucky to be able to be able to call Bruce a friend and it's been an honor to serve with him," City Manager Mark Winstanley said. "We're going to miss him a lot."

SOUTH COUNTY

Coronavirus cases on rise

By R.J. MARX
Seaside Signal

The southern part of Clatsop County faces a surge in positive coronavirus cases.

Since Oct. 30, the county has reported 43 confirmed coronavirus cases, of which 25 of those are identified as residents of an area which includes Seaside, Gearhart and Cannon Beach.

As of Tuesday, the county recorded a total of 293 cases since March, the health department reported. Two-hundred and forty-three of those have recovered. One person has been hospitalized; the others are convalescing at home.

According to the county's Public Health Department, parties and social gatherings among friends and family are the primary cause of these and other recent local COVID-19 cases.

"We have community spread," Public Health Director Michael McNickle said Monday. "The virus is in the county and is being spread through many routes of exposure."

The Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District closed the Sunset pool until Nov. 18 after a staff member tested positive for the coronavirus. They are recovering at home and in contact with their medical provider and the health department.

The city of Seaside refers all inquiries about coronavirus cases to the health department, City Manager Mark Winstanley said Monday, and does not keep statistics about local spread.

If a worker at a store tests positive for coronavirus and is a direct contact to a known case from another source, they would be contacted by the health department and asked to quarantine, McNickle said.

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Overhead view of Broadway Middle School.

Webinars planned ahead of potential middle school buy

By R.J. MARX
Seaside Signal

As the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District closes in on a Nov. 30 sale date for the \$2.25 million purchase of the former Broadway Middle School, the executive director and board are looking to the future.

How will the district use the 73,000 square feet of building space on 5.4 acres in the heart of Seaside, who will their partners be and how much will it cost?

Directors met at a work session last Thursday to receive a purchase update and schedule future public information sessions.

Livestreamed and on-demand webinars

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With homelessness, 'frustration' is the key word

By R.J. MARX
Seaside Signal

Seaside city councilors asked the police chief, city attorney and city manager what can be done to manage the growing number of homelessness in Seaside.

The workshop last Friday came after Seaside Mayor Jay Barber sounded an alarm about chronic homelessness, with increasing numbers of people living on the city's wooded fringes, on riverbanks or in cars.

"The purpose of this meeting is to educate the council

so we can begin to involve the community to get input from everybody affected by, both those who are homeless and those in the surrounding areas impacted by people who are homeless," Barber said at the workshop. "In the city's attempt to deal with this, we've come up with all types of challenges being able to work with people who are homeless. What are our options to deal with this issue in our community?"

Those options are limited, City Attorney Dan Van Thiel said. "Frustration is probably the key word that I could use here."

Federal court decisions in Boise, Idaho, and Grants Pass have determined "homeless-

ness is not a crime," and cities cannot prevent the homeless from voluntarily sitting, lying or sleeping in public, Van Thiel said. "The answer quite simply is we are not going to be arresting these people," he said.

In most instances, police act as a referral to housing, mental health or drug addiction resources, Police Chief Dave Ham said.

When behaviors cross over to littering, fighting in public, or violations of open container laws, police may issue citations.

Since the homeless often don't have cellphones or a permanent residence, making contact is problematic.



A person sleeps at the Seaside Civic and Convention Center parking lot.

R.J. Marx



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