



SEASIDE Signal

OUR 113th Year

SEASIDESIGNAL.COM

December 25, 2020 \$1.00

SEASIDE YEAR IN REVIEW



R.J. Marx

In August, dual rallies at the Turnaround brought the threat of violence.

City shaken by pandemic

Seaside Signal

In a year where the coronavirus dictated the rules, Seaside worked to navigate a complex landscape driven by the pandemic, waves of visitors and a highly charged election season.

After a surge of visitors on a springlike weekend in March, the City Council passed a resolution declaring a state of emergency in the city caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

City Hall, the public library and Sunset Pool closed and businesses faced state and local restrictions. The Seaside Civic and Convention Center, after a major expansion and renovation, sat empty much of the year because of virus restrictions.

See Seaside, Page A3

GEARHART YEAR IN REVIEW

A new mayor; school is sold

Seaside Signal

The coronavirus pandemic changed the way people lived and businesses operated in Gearhart in 2020. The elementary school closed and the Pacific Way shut its restaurant doors after 32 years. Even the post office changed, with two single-file entry lines, plastic barriers and 6-foot distancing markers. Plans for the proposed new firehouse simmered but won't come before the public until 2021, when new Mayor Paulina Cockrum leads the council. And finally, in Gearhart, how many elk is too many?

School sale

Built in 1949 and an icon at the corner of Pacific Way at the city's entrance, Gearhart Elementary was one of four elementary schools sold by the Seaside School District as students moved to a new campus outside of the tsunami inundation zone.

Originally listed at \$1.9 million, the school district lowered the price to \$1.2 million earlier this year before authorizing the sale in August at \$750,000.

Scofi Gearhart, an Oregon LLC, purchased the property for \$500,000, which included a \$100,000 educational grant to the seller in addition to the \$400,000 purchase price.

The managing members, Robert S. "Bob" Morey and Timi Morey, are Gearhart residents.

Uses for the site are restricted, designed for community or educational use. Any planned

See Gearhart, Page A3

SANTA'S WORKSHOP



Katherine Lacaze

Sandy McDowall and Santa Claus greet community members as they come to pick up toys for gifts at the Seaside Civic and Convention Center during Seaside Rotary Club's annual Santa's Workshop program.

ROTARY BRINGS HOLIDAY CHEER TO LOCAL FAMILIES

By KATHERINE LACAZE
For Seaside Signal

The Seaside Civic and Convention Center was transformed into Santa's Workshop last week, with Seaside Rotary Club members working diligently like elves to ensure hundreds of children in the community have a present for the holidays.

"It's a great project," said Sandy McDowall, the Rotarian who serves as a co-chair for Santa's Workshop.

The volunteers spent several days collecting presents, moving them to and from storage and sorting through them. Last Wednesday, parents from the Seaside and Gearhart area were invited to the convention center to pick out one large toy and two smaller stocking stuffers for their kids. They also received a roll of wrapping paper to take home. Overall, Santa's Workshop served 93 families — or a total of 325 children — this year.

Seaside Rotary uses some of its reserve funds to purchase gifts for Santa's Workshop, but a majority of the items are provided via the Marine Corps League's Toys



Katherine Lacaze

Volunteer Leah Griffith organizes toys for Seaside Rotary Club's annual Santa's Workshop program.

for Tots Campaign. McDowall praised the work of Clatsop County's Toys for Tots coordinator, Lou Neubecker, and his wife, Bev, who dedicate significant time and effort every year to make sure different groups throughout the county have toys to distribute to their local

See Santa, Page A5



Katherine Lacaze

One of Seaside Rotary Club's three programs that take place during the winter holidays is Santa's Workshop.

School offers an early grad date

By KATHERINE LACAZE
For Seaside Signal

Seaside High School is providing the Class of 2021 the opportunity to graduate early in order to move on to the next chapter of their life amid the coronavirus.

"We are going to have essentially two graduation dates that will be effective the end of second trimester and third trimester," Seaside principal Jeff Roberts told the Seaside School District Board of Directors last week. "These are students that have decided, 'it's time.' They're ready to take that next step. We want to do all that we can to support them when they've met all the graduation requirements we've set in front of them."

According to Roberts, students must be officially provided an effective high school graduation date in order to access certain resources for future opportunities, such as financial aid for college.

There are about 10% to 15% of Seaside seniors who have indicated a desire to graduate early. Roberts believes that number is likely to fluctuate as more information becomes available over the next couple months. If extracurriculars, like sports, are able to resume in the spring, some seniors may choose to stay enrolled to access those activities.

"If, in fact, those appear to not happen, I would expect to see a larger number of students say, 'I'm done,'" Roberts said. "We're not going to require students to make that decision until they absolutely need to."

'WE WANT TO SEE DECLINING CASES IN ORDER TO BRING OUR STUDENTS BACK ON-SITE!'

Superintendent Susan Penrod

Another reason for making this decision is that seniors do not have to complete Pacifica Projects as a graduation requirement for the first time in nearly three decades.

Students who choose to graduate in March will still be able to participate in the commencement ceremony at the end of the school year.

"Hopefully we'll be able to do that in person," Roberts said.

However, even if it ends up being a socially distanced event, as it was for the Class of 2020, the high school will allow all graduating seniors to take part.

School board member Brian Taylor expressed approval for the school's decision to offer early graduation, saying it will "allow these kids to move forward during this year."

During the meeting, the board also approved a request from Superintendent Susan Penrod to continue comprehensive distance learning until at least Feb. 1, at which point leadership will evaluate the current data on COVID-19 case counts.

Penrod's recommendation was based on Clatsop County's increasing coronavirus numbers.

"This is sad news," Penrod said. "We want to see declining cases in order to bring our students back on-site."

Feb. 1 is approximately halfway through the second trimester for Seaside schools. At that

See School, Page A5

Vacation property owners say they are unfairly targeted

By R.J. MARX
Seaside Signal

While Mayor Jay Barber and others applauded Jeff Flory's work as the city's code compliance officer handling vacation rentals, a group of vacation rental homeowners were not as enthusiastic.

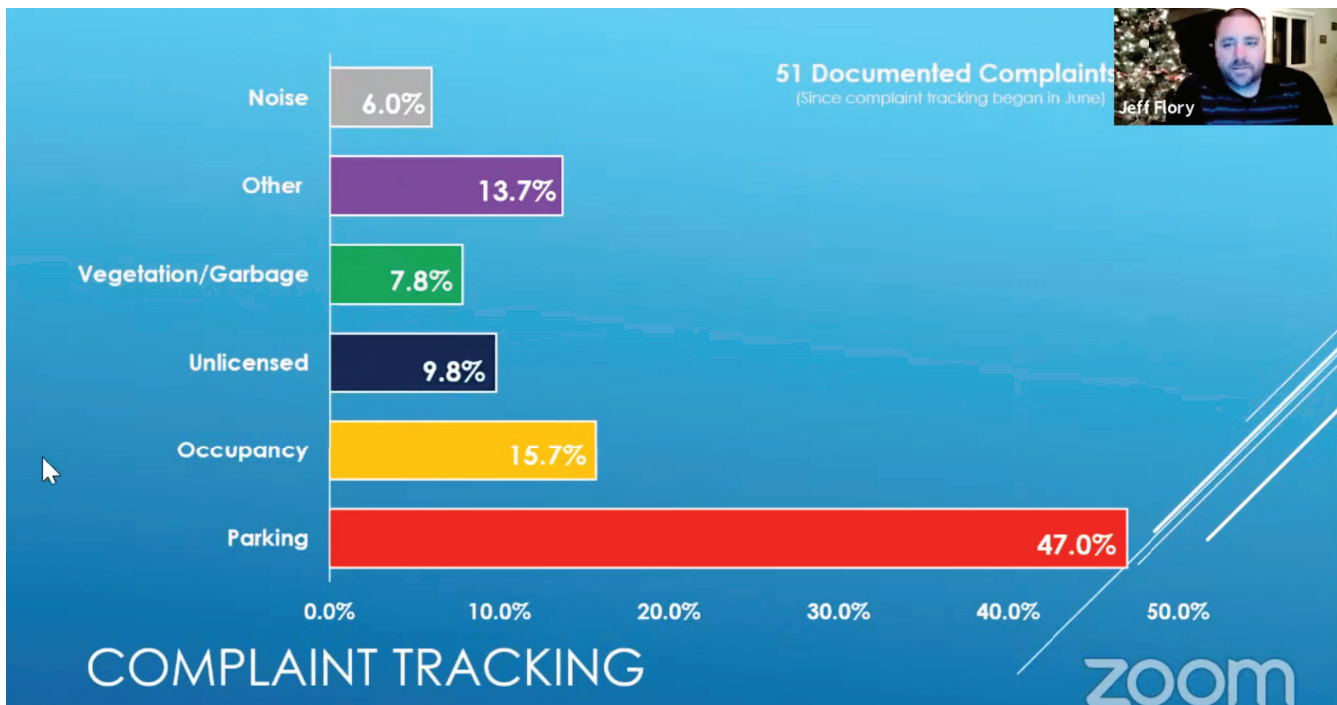
Flory's presentation to the City Council in December reviewed his first six months in office, addressing the backlog of inspections, developing local contacts with homeowners and managing vacation rental complaints. He provided a com-

plaint/resolution breakdown and introduced software to monitor compliance.

"We really wanted to establish a line of communication from the city to VRD owners, property managers and Seaside residents," Flory said. "To me, it was being accessible and having that line open."

"From the whole City Council, bravo," Barber told Flory. "Amazing work in the first six months of your tenure. Thank you, Jeff, for a great report."

In 2019, the City Council voted unanimously to raise annual permit fees for the city's 425 vacation rentals. The fee added \$400 per year to all permit costs, to



Jeff Flory, Seaside's code compliance officer, at a City Council meeting this month.



See Rental, Page A5

7 29467 20040 1