

PLANNER: Davenport brings extensive, varied experience

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Africa as a rural development advisor involved him in a rangeland management project.

Davenport returned to the southeastern United States and spent a number of years in Virginia and North Carolina working in the fields of land surveying, land acquisition, zoning and subdivision administration in a town that processed 1,000 permits a year, and in community development.

His final job on the East Coast was as the planning and development director in Pender County, North Carolina, in a coastal community with similarities to Sisters. The population consisted of a mix of long-time natives, people who chose to relocate there to live and work near the beach, and retirees who gave Florida a try and then settled further north on the Carolina coast. They were active, outspoken "local-government watchers," and city meetings were long, involving lots of talking and lots of listening.

Following the January 2010 earthquake in Haiti, Davenport put his planning experience to use as a principle urban planner for reconstruction and restabilization when the U.S. Agency for International Development sent Civilian Response Corps teams to aid in the Haitian cleanup and rebuilding efforts.

"This is my chance to work overseas. This will be great," Davenport thought when he received the assignment.

He faced a multitude of challenges, including Haitian bureaucratic corruption, a cholera outbreak, limited U.S. funding for the proposed

15,000 housing units that were to be spread across the island at 15 to 20 different sites, and a lack of public-works administration and infrastructure.

"I provided urban-planning-related advice and program management for that effort," he said.

For two years, Davenport dealt with the multiple challenges in his efforts to meet with local mayors and leaders, find and survey appropriate sites, and prepare reports about potential suitability.

At the end of his two-year term in Haiti, Davenport found himself the next Monday in Kabul, Afghanistan, as a member of the Ministry of Defense Advisors (MODA), attached to various military commands, to work as a senior manager/installation management planner.

Davenport was assigned to work with the Afghan Ministry of Defense Construction and Property Management Department, working mainly in master land-use planning and personnel training.

Davenport's team acted as liaisons between various commands, which necessitated being transported by the military in armored vehicles to points outside their base. Upon arrival at their destination, the team was dropped off for four to five hours to do their work, wearing body armor and sidearms, which were removed upon entering the office.

"I did about 200 overall missions while I was there for my year tour," he recalled. "I was pretty busy — sometimes two a day. Every time we'd go outside the wire, that was called a mission... That was really exciting."

While Davenport was working in Haiti, his wife, Christina, and their three children moved from Pender County to Bend, where her brother had lived for 15 years.

On previous visits to Central Oregon, the family had fallen in love with the area and hoped to one day settle here. And settled they are.

"We love it here," said Davenport.

The Davenports are outdoor enthusiasts who enjoy hiking, skiing and snowboarding.

When Davenport saw the job listing on the League of Oregon Cities website, he knew he wanted to put his local government planning experience to work in Sisters.

"Local government planning is what I feel I do the best and what I'd like to do for the rest of my career," he said.

City Manager Andrew Gorayeb said it was several factors that made Davenport the City's first choice for the community development director position.

"It was a combination of several things: his experience specific to the position of community development director, and I also think his perspective on public engagement and outreach and process is very strong," he said.

The technical side of the job is not a concern to Davenport. He views the most important aspect being the relationships, getting to know the people and the history, and being responsive to the developers and the citizens.

"The technical part is pretty easy to pick up on. I've got a few weeks to get up to speed on the history of current projects before Pauline leaves... I think being able to work with the developers and the citizens and being responsive to whatever they're asking for — whether

the developers are asking to develop or the citizens are asking what's going on with what the developers want to build — that's the important stuff. That's what you have to be very good at."

He hopes that everyone will be patient with both the new associate, who should be on board any day, and him, as they will initially be on a pretty steep learning curve.

"I hope they'll see that I'm very approachable and, if I have time and I'm not right in the middle of something important, I'll always have time for people," he assured the residents.

Davenport's initial impression of Sisters is a positive one.

"I can see it's a very well-planned and developed community... You can tell right away as you're driving down Cascade; you can see how things are doing, how clean it is. You notice the uniformity. There's a lack of things like flashing signs, which means code enforcement's doing a relatively good job."

Davenport is aware of the current issues in the city.

"I understand that there's a group of residents here that are very involved and are watching to make sure we are following procedures and I can't fix what happened in the past; nobody can. However, we can certainly learn from those decisions, even if they weren't mistakes, and go forward," he said.

"My goal as a director is that going forward we want to make sure everything is being done by the book. Certain decisions are out of our hands. They have the authority to make legislative decisions



PHOTO BY SUE STAFFORD

Patrick Davenport.

on the City Council, and the Planning Commission makes decisions, and we (the planners) can only make recommendations — yes, it meets the minimum code standards; yes, it meets the state-wide standards — and still it's up to them at that point. We give them as much information as we can, but every once in a while there are going to be decisions that one side or the other doesn't like," he said.

"Sisters should be proud of what they have going on... similar-sized jurisdictions across the state ... and in other states as well, are really struggling. They would just beg for the issues we have."

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