

McKenzie River Trust buys 150 acres near Blue River

EUGENE (AP) — The nonprofit McKenzie River Trust has completed the purchase of more than 150 acres of land near Blue River to help protect water quality and salmon habitat.

The *Register-Guard* reports that the trust purchased the land for \$775,000 to help with conservation of the McKenzie River, which provides drinking water to the Eugene Water & Electric Board.

The electric board commissioners authorized a \$250,000 grant for restoration of the property and have agreed to match up to \$500,000 of money the trust raises through a fundraising campaign.

The trust and landowner Rosboro, a Springfield forest products company, are also in talks for the purchase of 110 acres across the river.

Planning department has a big work load

By Sue Stafford
Correspondent

The Community Development Department (CDD) at Sisters City Hall has been a beehive of activity for the past year, and there are no signs of slowing down in 2016. In a recent report to City Council of 2015 activities by the CDD, the breadth and depth of their responsibilities were clearly evident.

Patrick Davenport, community development director, joined the City staff in March 2015, quickly followed by Associate Planner Darcy Reed in April. They, along with long-time Planning Technician Carol Jenkins, face a large workload for such a small staff.

Residential building permits in 2015 were issued for 46 structures, including 36 single-family detached homes.

A commercial building permit was issued for the new Sisters Village Hotel planned for West Hood Avenue, adjacent to Pine Meadow Village, with construction scheduled to begin this spring. Legacy Builders constructed three two-story mixed-use buildings with commercial space

below and living space above, behind Hop 'n Brew on South Cedar Street.

Trade permits issued for electrical, mechanical and plumbing projects totaled 134. There were 31 permits for additional/tenant improvements and 12 demolitions.

Development reviews are within the purview of the CDD, and they received 43 applications for a variety of reviews, from subdivision master plans to lot-line adjustments to major variances. Any construction project slated for Sisters must be reviewed and approved by the CDD. Larger projects require many hours on the part of staff to review and ensure that everything planned will be done according to existing City codes. Some of the plans require hearings before the Planning Commission and/or City Council, which add to the staff workload.

Another area of responsibility is the enforcement of City codes: everything from weed abatement to noise complaints and neighbor conflicts over fences. Of the 177 total cases opened in 2015, 111 were successfully closed.

Davenport and his staff

process all urban renewal applications for compliance with URA requirements and prepare them for approval/denial by City Council. Last year there were 19 applications for façade improvement projects and three trash enclosure projects. Seven have been completed, 13 are outstanding (work yet to be completed), and two were ineligible.

Evidence of a busy City Hall is reflected in the 740 front counter customer contacts in 2015 regarding CDD issues.

To add to the usual workload and busy meeting schedules, Davenport and Reed have been involved in a number of time-consuming projects. A housing needs analysis was undertaken as part of a larger look at the issue of affordable housing for Sisters. This effort, nearing completion, led to the creation of a detailed inventory of every parcel of land in the city limits, something that has never existed. With this tool in hand, staff and the Planning Commission will have an accurate picture of what currently exists and what is needed. From here forward, updates will keep

the inventory current at all times.

The City Parks Master Plan, which details inventory of existing parks and makes recommendations for improvements and acquisition, is a large, detailed document, which is updated every so often. This lengthy job for staff and the City Parks Advisory Board is nearing completion.

The largest component of the Parks Master Plan update has been the almost two-year project of completing the Creekside Park and Campground Master Plan, which becomes part of the City Parks Master Plan.

Grant applications to help fund various proposed projects around town, such as park improvements, multi-use paths, and Transportation System Plan updates, also are written by CDD staff.

There were a number of controversial issues addressed by the CDD in 2015, including mobile food carts, transient merchants, and the Creekside Campground Master Plan, all of which required numerous public hearings and meetings with neighbors and interested parties.

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