

Cannon Beach rewards a local property owner's 'due diligence'

City Council allows Jeff Nicholson to build three new cottages, restore old one after all

By ERICK BENGEL
EO Media Group

CANNON BEACH — A property owner found himself nearly in tears by the end of Tuesday's Cannon Beach City Council meeting.

But they would have been tears of gratitude and relief, betokening the end of a long, uncertain journey.

Jeff Nicholson, who purchased 0.57 acres at 532 N. Laurel St. last summer for \$895,000, persuaded the council to grant a variance to the city's slope-density requirement.

The decision allows Nicholson to build, and later sell, three family-sized cottages on the site, which will help him invest in another project: tearing down an existing 99-year-old ramshackle cottage on the site's northwest corner and rebuilding it with the original materials according to current building codes.

The slope-density requirement states that, in order to build on properties sloped more than 30 percent — like Nicholson's — the lot must be at least 20,000 square feet. The logic is that too many structures on a steeply sloped site may prove unstable and should be avoided.

The four developable 5,000-square-foot lots on Nicholson's property were,

therefore, automatically consolidated into one buildable 20,000-square-foot lot — meaning, only one house would have been permitted on the acreage. And since a house already stood there, Nicholson wouldn't have been able to raise any additional houses.

The council's decision, which recognizes the four separate lots for development purposes, changes that.

As for the development itself, the council approved Nicholson's plan on condition that he:

- Move the building footprints of two lots 5 feet west for greater setback;
- Limit the four structures on the parcel to a cumulative total of 9,000 square feet;

• Embed planters into a planned retaining wall situated near the driveway and keep it a "living wall";

• Consult with an arborist to make sure two large trees on his property won't get seriously damaged during construction;

• Repair any damage done to Laurel Street during development at his own expense, restoring it to its current condition.

A 'big thing'

To make the variance — and, thus, Nicholson's vision — possible, the council approved a planned development (PD)

overlay zone. This is an amendment to a zone map that gives the council greater freedom to approve development projects on land with unique features.

Nicholson feared that, if he was unable to go ahead with the development, he would have had no choice but to sell the property — and that it may have passed to someone bent on erecting a 15,000-square-foot trophy house utterly out of character with the style and scale of the neighborhood.

In allowing Nicholson to move forward, the council chose not to act on the planning commission's January recommendation that the PD be denied. Councilor George Vetter noted that it's a "big thing" when the council doesn't heed the planning commission.

Both the planning commission and the council denied Nicholson's first request for the slope-density variance late last year.

"I really appreciate, Mr. Nicholson, your passion for what you're doing here. And I think, as a city, we're fortunate to have someone like you buy this property, that sees a preservation, cares about the community, knows what the culture is here," councilor Wendy Higgins said. "Your due diligence has paid off."

When Higgins took the time to acknowledge Nicholson's good intentions, "It seriously took everything in me to not break out crying," Nicholson said after the meeting.

Warrenton approves marina rate hikes

By DERRICK DePLEGGE

The Daily Astorian

WARRENTON — The Warrenton City Commission Tuesday night unanimously approved rate increases over five years for mooring at the Warrenton and Hammond marinas to help finance overdue improvements.

Yearly rates of \$32 per foot for recreational boats and \$33 per foot for commercial boats will rise by \$1 annually from 2016 to 2020.

The city has had to catch

up on marina rates and fees after being forced to give refunds because a previous rate increase was improperly approved.

"A lot of it is just keeping up with the cost of doing business out there," City Manager Kurt Fritsch said.

Keith Pinkstaff, the city's harbor master, told the commission that security cameras and parking lot striping will soon improve operations at the Warrenton Marina.

The docks eventually will be upgraded.

Some who live and work

out of the Warrenton Marina complained about the poor condition of the docks, inadequate parking and other shortcomings.

Gary Wintersteen, a commercial fisherman, said parking is often a problem for fishermen and the federal fishery observers who collect fishing data.

"What would be a polite term to use? The parking is some of the worst ever for a commercial boat basin," he told commissioners.

Commissioners agreed to allow federal fishery observ-

ers to obtain guest passes for parking. The guest passes will not count toward the two parking passes per slip that annual moorage holders receive with their rentals.

At a work session before the commission meeting, commissioners reached consensus on the city's goals for the upcoming fiscal year. The commission will focus on flood protection and flood insurance issues; downtown and marina improvements; business and industrial development; and lifting development restraints in Hammond.

Warrenton turns to mobile classrooms

By EDWARD STRATTON

The Daily Astorian

The Warrenton-Hammond School District, which grew by 88 students from last year according to the state, will move forward with a project to add two modular classrooms to Warrenton Grade School as a stopgap measure.

"Classroom space — we're out," said Superintendent Mark Jeffery in a presentation Tuesday on modulars to his school board. "There's just no more room."

The school board approved Jeffery and staff spending up to \$397,298, likely financed through a loan, to add two 28-by-64-foot modular classrooms made by Modern Building Systems in Chehalis, Wash., each costing around \$108,000. The budget includes \$180,000 for site prep, installing utilities, permitting, playground equipment, classroom furniture and administrative costs.

The district already has one modular placed at Warrenton Grade School between the existing school building,



EDWARD STRATTON — The Daily Astorian

Warrenton Grade School, which has a modular classroom between its building, Ninth Street and the track, will add two more for next year to accommodate its surging elementary enrollment.

Ninth Street and the school's track. It's looking at placing the additional two modulars between the school building and the track.

Growing enrollment

The district's overall enrollment has gone up from 784 in the 2004-05 academic year to 971 as of the state enrollment report gathered between Sept. 25 and Jan. 29.

A particular shock this

year was the 110 kindergartners starting at WGS, an increase from the classes in the 60s and 70s Jeffery said were the norm when he started four years ago.

Warrenton and Knappa school districts are the only ones offering full-day kindergarten, which Jeffery said draws students from outside the district. As other districts start offering full-day kindergarten next year, he added, en-

rollment should level out, but even without out-of-district students, Warrenton is running at more than 80 kindergartners, far above its previous averages.

"This takes the pressure off for I think at least the next 24 months," said Jeffery, adding that if enrollment continues increasing, the district needs to look at longer-term solutions involving its grade and high schools.

Microplastics cleanup slated for Sunday

Marc Ward, who runs the nonprofit Sea Turtles Forever, is organizing another cleanup of what he termed the "Columbia River South Jetty Mega Sink" at 1 p.m. Sunday.

The inlet, just past Parking Lot C in Fort Stevens State Park, plays host to anything as large as tires down to granules of microplastic hidden on and under driftwood and the rolling dunes near the South Jetty.

"We could use 200 people," said Ward, who organized volunteers for a full cleanup in the summer of 2013. "It's really over the top. And a lot of it is microplastic, which is hard to collect. There's a dump truck of stuff that's in there."

Ward said he already has about 50 people coming, including members of the Port-

land Eco-School Network and volunteers from SOLVE (an acronym for Stop Oregon Litter and Vandalism; the "E" has been added to address a call to action), the environmental nonprofit.

The site of the megasink is also a snowy plover recovery site, said Ward, and its nesting season starts in March.

"We haven't figured out how it gets in there," said Ward of the microplastic. "But it does."

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Chronic pain

Painkillers and anti-inflammatories can get us through a tough time with back, neck, head or leg pain, but they weren't designed for long-term use. Yearly deaths from pain medication are climbing. Other side effects can include constipation, liver and kidney damage; addiction from them is real and a growing problem. Pain is a signal that something is wrong. Pain medication does not fix the problem — it changes the brain. Reducing pain can be as simple as identifying its source and providing a different approach — chiropractic is an important part of that. "Maybe you don't have to live with it." Call 503-325-3311.

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