

Cannon Beach Council hopeful about downtown pedestrian mall

City may close part of Hemlock for occasional events, at first

By ERICK BENGEL
EO Media Group

CANNON BEACH — The city of Cannon Beach is toying with the idea of establishing a downtown “pedestrian mall.”

Every so often, perhaps one or two evenings a month, the city would close off a section of Hemlock Street to vehicular traffic, opening it up to pedestrians, restaurants that want to set up tables in the street, and other businesses and organizations that would hold family-friendly functions. Music and entertainment may also become regular features of the mall.

The City Council listed a pedestrian mall as one of its goals during the group’s January goal-setting retreat. City Manager Brant Kucera raised the issue at the April 14 work session to get the planning underway and give the city enough time to “try it out this year.”

“I’ve seen this (done) in many communities,” Kucera said. “There is no doubt that they are very successful events. I’ve never heard of this being



Brant Kucera

an unpopular thing to do anywhere.”

Kennett Square, Pa., created something similar while Kucera worked there. One thing he learned was people were already familiar with the concept. “It’s not like we just invented something,” he said. “We’re just doing what a lot of other places were doing.”

It would need to happen on evenings that are busy but not too busy; Thursdays work best in Kucera’s experience, he said. The event could be modeled on well-known First Thursday events held in Portland and other towns with robust arts scenes.

Mayor Sam Steidel suggested that, at first, the pedestrian mall could be adapted to an existing event, like the Gallery



Courtland Carrier

Group’s Spring Unveiling or Plein Air & More arts festivals.

Eventually, though, it could evolve into an event unto itself,

bringing more locals and tourists into town, stimulating the retail and restaurant industries, and raising the profile of downtown Cannon Beach.

Business community

Rather than simply springing the pedestrian mall on downtown businesses, the city should give them an opportunity to “buy in” to the concept, Kucera said.

Councilor Mike Benefield proposed the city work with the Cannon Beach Chamber of Commerce, perhaps by putting together an ad hoc group to brainstorm the event.

Courtland Carrier, the chamber’s executive director who

was seated in the audience, said that he had already spoken to a number of people in the community about the pedestrian mall idea, and “there’s a lot of people interested in it.”

He mentioned, however, that some research would need to be done to anticipate the possible downsides.

“Traffic control is going to be the big issue that we need to address, obviously,” Kucera said, noting that the public works and police departments will need to be “heavily involved.”

In addition, the city will have to ensure that the event doesn’t conflict with its restrictions on outdoor merchandising and, if restaurants serve alcohol out-

doors, that it complies with Oregon Liquor Control Commission rules.

Benefield encouraged people who have been to pedestrian-mall-type events before to share their ideas with Kucera and/or Carrier.

“It’ll evolve and grow,” Benefield said, adding he has enjoyed pedestrian malls elsewhere. “They are fun, and they bring life to the city.”

“I’m so happy that this is being discussed, because this is something I feel Cannon Beach was ripe for 20 years ago,” Councilor George Vetter said. “We need to do it at least once, if we never do it again, because we’ll learn something.”

‘Smart Driver’ classes set

AARP is holding five “Smart Driver” classes in May. The classes have new student guide books and videos. All of the classes are from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and include a 45-minute break for lunch, and two short breaks. Those attending should come early to get the paperwork done. The schedule is as follows:

• May 5: Bob Chisholm Community Center, 1225 Avenue A, Seaside. The class is taught by Ron Blin. Call 503-738-7393 or 503-338-2408 to register.

• May 12: Nea-Kah-Nie High School, 24705 U.S. Highway 101, Rockaway Beach. The instructor is Craig Leslie. Register at 503-842-8222 or 888-306-8222.

• May 14: Ranier Senior Center, 48 W 7th Ave, Ranier. Sheryl Teuscher is teaching. Call 503-556-3889 or 503-338-2408 to register.

• May 23: Ocean Crest Chevrolet, 855 Alternate U.S. Hwy 101, Warrenton. Di Stuppy is the instructor. Reg-

ister at 503-338-2408.

• May 28: Astoria Senior Center (Old Yacht Club), 1555 W. Marine Drive, Astoria. Don Hawley is the teacher. Register at 503-325-3231 or 503-338-2408.

These courses are designed for seniors age 50 and older, but anyone can attend. Oregon state law provides for a discount on auto insurance premium for completing this course. Attendance at the entire class is required to receive a certificate of completion. Most insurance companies require that a refresher course be taken every three years to continue to receive the discount; or every two years for those who are 70 or older.

Preregistration is required and seating is limited. The cost for the class is \$15 for AARP members and \$20 for nonmembers. Tuition is payable at the start of class, with checks made payable to AARP.

For questions or information, contact John Benson at 503-738-5925 or bensonsbend@gmail.com

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NICK BENAS
Director of Business Operations for Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare, Certified Mental Health First Aid Instructor

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If interested in being certified Mental Health First Aider, please contact Nick Benas at 503.325.0241 ext.220
mailto:nickb@clatsopbh.org

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CLASSIFIED INDEX

| | |
|--|------------------------------|
| ANNOUNCEMENTS | 285-290.....RV/Trailer Space |
| 055.....Care Centers | |
| 035.....Lost & Found | |
| 040.....Personals | |
| 050.....Professional Services | |
| 061.....Bankruptcy | |
| EMPLOYMENT | |
| 060.....Babysitters, Child Care | |
| 070.....Help Wanted | |
| 080.....Work Wanted | |
| INSTRUCTION | |
| 095.....Schools & Education | |
| 408.....Music Lessons | |
| FINANCIAL | |
| 105-106.....Business For Sale-Sales Op | |
| 120.....Money To Lend | |
| REAL ESTATE | |
| 130.....Open Houses | |
| 150-200.....For Sale | |
| 160.....Lots & Acreage | |
| 195.....Homes Wanted | |
| 205-275.....Rentals | |
| MISCELLANEOUS | |
| 300.....Jewelry | |
| 310.....Tools & Heavy Equipment | |
| 350.....Appliances | |
| 360.....Furniture & HH Goods | |
| 365.....Antiques & Collectibles | |
| 375.....Misc. For Sale | |
| 379-395.....Swap Meets & Garage Sales | |
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| 410.....Musical Instruments | |
| 430.....Arts & Crafts | |
| ANIMALS/LIVESTOCK | |
| 460.....Animal Boarding | |
| 470.....Feed-Hay-Grain | |
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Deadline: May 6, 2015

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NEW TODAY

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