

Sunset Lake RV Park request denied

Owner wanted to change ratio of mobile homes, permanent RVs

By KYLE SPURR
The Daily Astorian

As part of a settlement with Clatsop County, the owner of an overcrowded Warrenton RV park agreed in December to reduce the number of permanent dwellings from more than 60 to 43 — the number stipulated in a 2012 compliance order.

Ken Hick, owner of the Sunset Lake Resort and RV Park, recently submitted an application to the Clatsop County Planning Commission to change the ratio of the 43 units.

He requested the ratio of 18 mobile homes and 25 permanent RVs be changed to 21 and 22, respectively.

The Planning Commission denied his request Tuesday with a vote of 6-1, after considering public comment from Hick's attorney and multiple neighbors against the change.

Dozens of neighbors held a community meeting last week at the Astoria Golf and Country Club with representatives from the Clatsop County Sheriff's Office and Warrenton Fire Department to discuss ongoing concerns with the park.

Ken Ellsworth, a neighbor, said Tuesday neighbors are frustrated that Hick never complied with previous orders and still has not complied with the December settlement. More than 50 permanent dwellings appear to still be on the property, he said.

"His actions speak louder than his attorney's words," Ellsworth said.

The county began enforcement action against the park in 2009 in response to complaints from neighbors. At the time, county staff found about 90 units at the park, with more than 60 connected to an overburdened septic system. Gray water was also being released into the lake from some sites, according to a citation.

The overcrowding also appeared to increase criminal incidents, according to the county.

A hearings officer issued an order in September 2012 to set the maximum number of permanent mobile homes at 18 and RVs at 25. Hick failed to meet the order.

After several inspections and continued non-compliance, Clatsop County sued Hick in late 2013 to enforce its order. The December settlement dropped the lawsuit and ended the lengthy stand-off over the multiple code violations. Hick had to pay

\$5,000 to offset the county's costs.

Ken and Joyce Carrell, who live near the park, said no matter what the ratio, 43 permanent units is still too many for the park.

"I have trouble believing (Hick) is going to be in good faith, when he has not historically shown he has been in good faith," Ken Carrell said.

Blair Henningsgaard, legal counsel for the Planning Commission, said Hick has a constitutional right to his property and the county cannot lower the number of spaces. In addition, Hick has the right to request a changed ratio, Henningsgaard said, and that right was agreed upon in the settlement.

"The county can't say that is the wrong number of spaces because as the years went by the county didn't take any action," Henningsgaard said.

Robert Stricklin, the Planning Commission member who cast the lone vote in favor of the ratio change, said he made the vote because the county already agreed to let Hick change the ratio.

Under the settlement agreement, Hick, owner of Resources Northwest Inc., had to apply to the county to modify the use or ratio of his park. It is then up to the county to approve his application. Stricklin suspects Hick's lawyer — Kevin Luby — will appeal the Planning Commission's decision.

County staff recommended approving Hick's request, claiming the ratio change would not expand or impact the square footage threshold at the park.

"Staff was not able to identify any adverse impacts that would result from just the change in the ratio," Senior Planner Jennifer Bunch said.

Warrenton City Commission backs water, sewer hikes

By DERRICK DePLEDGE
The Daily Astorian

WARRENTON — Water and sewer rates are going up.

The Warrenton City Commission voted unanimously Tuesday night to move forward with significant water and sewer rate increases necessary to sustain the city's infrastructure.

Water rates will increase by 15 percent, sewer rates will climb by 2.5 percent, and a storm sewer surcharge will double to 20 percent, up from 10 percent.

City staff estimates the water rate increase will bring in an additional \$300,000, the sewer rate bump will generate \$42,500, and the storm

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— Mark Kujala
Warrenton mayor

sewer surcharge hike will produce \$178,500.

For households that consume 4,000 gallons a month, the combined rate increases would raise the bill to \$115.28, up from \$104.86, a \$10.42 jump.

The rate increases will take effect in the new fiscal year that starts in July.

"It's a hard pill to swallow but it's something that we're going to have to do," Mayor Mark Kujala said.

Warrenton has resisted recommendations for

steep rate increases in the past, but has regularly raised rates to keep up with infrastructure. The storm sewer surcharge, however, has not been increased since it was first imposed in 1992.

The city will order new water and sewer rate studies that could help guide future rate structures.

The rate studies, City Manager Kurt Fritsch said, will help "folks know that we're not simply doing this by the seat of our pants. This is a

very serious concern of ours."

One of the issues influencing rate pressures is the loss of the Pacific Coast Seafoods processing plant to fire in 2013. The city has estimated the processing plant consumed about \$250,000 worth of water annually.

Kujala said the loss of revenue "really demonstrates the need to get Pacific Seafoods back to Warrenton."

A city budget committee had recommended the water and sewer rate increases in May.

The City Commission is expected to take final votes on the rate increases at a meeting later this month, when the commission will also likely approve the budget for next fiscal year.

Astoria names new community development director

The Daily Astorian

Kevin Cronin, a senior project manager and business development coordinator for the Portland Development Commission, has been named the new community development director in Astoria.

Cronin will help guide the city's development vision and oversee planning. The city has waited to hire a new planner until a community development director is in place.

Brett Estes, the city manager, was the city's former community development

director and has been handling both roles since last year.

Cronin, according to the city, is a former planning manager in Sherwood and city planner in Talent. He has worked with the Portland Development Commission since 2007.

"I am so excited to start

another chapter in my public service career," Cronin said in a statement. "Astoria is a stunning city and a

great community for me and my family. I'm ready to roll up my sleeves and get to work."

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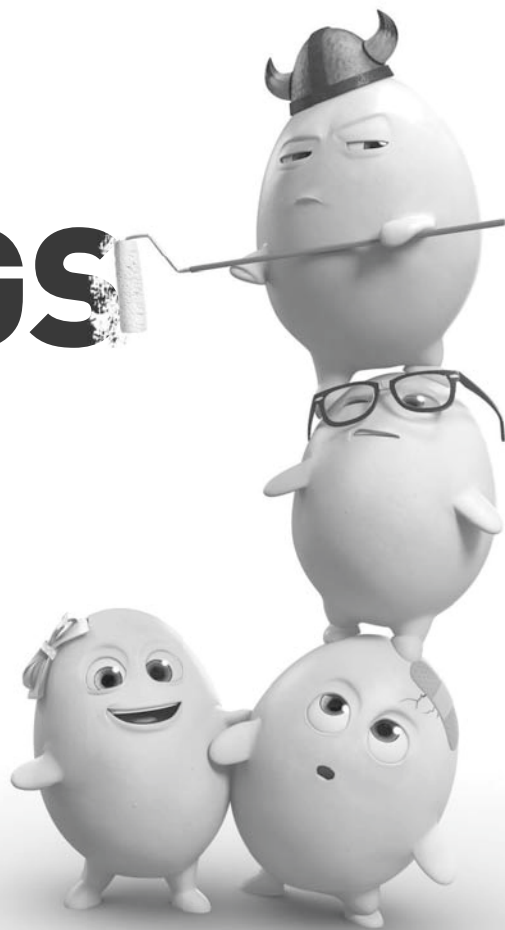
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