

Cannon Beach to leave dune-grading ordinance as is

No change while city develops sand management plan

By DANI PALMER
EO Media Group

CANNON BEACH — The Cannon Beach City Council has voted to table an amendment to city code that would forbid foredune grading until a sand management plan is complete in 18 to 24 months. It was a win — for now — for homeowners who say they have the right to grade.

Planning Commission members had voted to recommend the amendment to the Oceanfront Management

Overlay Zone in late October. Commissioner Lisa Kerr said the city's sand management study may conclude that leaving the dunes alone is best, or that grading is the right choice.

Homeowners say the proposed prohibition equates to a moratorium violating state guidelines. Dean Alterman, Breakers Point Homeowners Association's attorney, offered alternatives, including a "spacing out of impact."

"If the two years becomes three or four or five or never, if a future City Council decides it wants to do something else, that leaves the Breakers Point homeowners in a very bad position with the sand that's coming in," he said.

Breakers Point homeowner Frank Patrick said the prohibition would prevent homeowners from their right to public access. He cited an

'That blasted grass has gotten out of control.'

Frank Patrick, Breakers Point homeowner

already inaccessible access for emergency vehicles on the property. Fore-dune grading, affecting Breakers Point and the presidential streets in Cannon Beach, is done to maintain views or prevent inundation.

With the prohibition set to potentially become reality, City Planner Mark Barnes said he received an application for fore-dune grading earlier in the day. Breakers Point was recently granted permission to grade 13,700-cubic-yards of sand and indicated plans to

seek permits for more in the near future.

Friends of the Dunes' Clay Newton said he interpreted homeowners' reaction as fear.

"None of us know what that new plan will say," he said.

Without knowing the impact of the grading, Newton said he wants a regulated process before any more steps are taken to grade dunes.

"The folks that are the proponents of this are the friends of the dunes," said Breakers Point homeowner Ed Stone. "Myself and the rest of the

owners at Breakers Point are the neighbors of the dunes and they're causing us monumental problems."

He noted his dune has grown about 100 yards horizontally and 52 feet vertically. When he moved into his upstairs condo on Ecola Creek, he could see the beach. Now, he can't.

"That blasted grass has gotten out of control," Patrick said, and will grow another 15 feet in the time it takes to complete the sand management plan.

Breakers Point Homeowners Association Property Manager Bruce Francis said he didn't understand why the Planning Commission even felt the need to amend the ordinance. To acquire a permit for dune grading would take as long as the city needs to finish the sand management plan.

Councilor Mike Benefield said the current Land Use Board of Appeals approved sand management plan is out of date and Cannon Beach needs "a breather" while it's updated. He noted a gentleman's agreement to not dune grade was ignored in the past.

"I'm not opposed to grading," he said. "I'm just opposed to doing something without knowing what its effect is going to be."

Councilor Wendy Higgins said the city does need a completed study, but added that allowing the sand to further build will only make the situation worse.

The council voted 3-2 on Nov. 3 to table the discussion. Higgins, Councilor George Vetter and Mayor Sam Steidel voted 'yes.' Councilors Benefield and Melissa Cadwallader voted 'no.'

Johnson: 'One of the greatest things I have done'

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Johnson had marched in the band since seventh grade, and played tenor saxophone in the high school jazz and concert bands. He marched in his freshman year and played basketball, then changed direction as a sophomore to play football and basketball.

Amid his difficulties, IHS music teacher Rachel Lake encouraged him to audition for drum major, the bandsman who conducts the musicians and directs the marching movements. It would mean trading his saxophone for a baton. And taking responsibility as a leader.

At the end of his sophomore year, facing competition from two soon-to-be seniors, Johnson stepped up. He gave a speech about his ambitions and conducted a piece ("I was a terrible conductor — I have learned a lot since then") then waited for every band student in grades six through 11 to cast their vote.

They chose him. "It's one of the greatest things I have done," he said. "I finally found something I was passionate about, being drum major in a marching band."

Lake is thrilled to have a motivated student to help her choreograph field shows — one who has the skill and organizational ability to lead practices and classes when she is away. "It makes the marching band a lot easier for me," said Lake, who has been teaching 11 years, the last eight at Ilwaco.

"He comes up with a lot of ideas," she added. "He has a great sense of humor. He is very positive and extremely cool-headed. He has a personality that everybody likes."

Marching band is an after-school activity, not a daytime class like concert band. Some 35 to 40 students show up to play and march, some of whom have just completed 90-minute sports practices. It's dark by the time they leave the field.

A proud Lake breaks into a broad grin as she mentions those numbers. "I want it to be a youth-driven program," she said. "The kids need to want to be there."

Johnson recruits for the band and serves as its liaison with the



Michael Johnson, drum major for the Ilwaco, Wash., marching band, leads an unusual dance routine called "Thriller" during the halftime show at a recent Ilwaco home football game. Johnson credits his leadership position with bringing his life back on a positive track.

Patrick Webb/For EO Media Group

leadership class, whose students coordinate IHS activities. Randy Bloom, who teaches the class, said Johnson contributes positive decision-making.

"I have asked him to step up many times, and he has never let me down," Bloom said. "I believe that his role as drum major has allowed him to believe in himself and become the leader that has always been inside of him."

Johnson said he has been stimulated by attending a drum major camp at the University of Washington the past two summers, honing his craft while talking with other band leaders about how they develop their programs.

"I have a lot of big ideas, but don't necessarily know how to put them into action," said Johnson.

Lake said she has designed this year's Ilwaco field shows, in part, to showcase Johnson's exuberance.

His joy of performing is evident. "I want to be out there," he said. "I want to be in front of a crowd."

He and Lake have dreamed up a "Pirates of the Caribbean" theme for the Auburn appearance, and they'll even take the Fishermen's pirate ship with them (it has wheels).

After football season, it will be time for pep band, which plays for home basketball

games, then they will march in spring parades. Johnson hasn't identified a clear path after graduation, though he wants to become a music teacher, having been inspired by Lake.

The only negative has been less time marching with his saxophone, though he still plays it in the concert and jazz bands.

"Yes, I miss my instrument, but for me I have the opportunity to conduct and lead the band," Johnson said. "I wouldn't give that up for the world."

Mill tour



Erick Bengel/The Daily Astorian

U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici, D-Oregon, took a tour of Warrenton's Hampton Lumber mill Monday afternoon as part of a larger tour through the major businesses in her congressional district.

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