

Cannon Beach seeks to draw offseason traffic

Deal with Chamber of Commerce to fund promotions

By DANI PALMER
EO Media Group

CANNON BEACH — After months of discussion, the Cannon Beach City Council formally approved a contract with the Chamber of Commerce Tuesday allocating room tax funds to off-season tourist promotions.

Under terms of the contract, the chamber will receive quarterly payments equal to 70 percent of the 1 percent hotel room tax increase approved in August. The other 30 percent of the 1 percent increase will go into the city's general fund. The room tax increase went into effect on Oct. 1 and with the state's 1 percent tax, brought Cannon Beach's lodging tax to 9 percent.

Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Court Carrier said the money will be used to market the city during the time of year "hardly anyone is here." The promotions program will include advertising and a new job position geared toward bringing in more events and clientele from September through May.

"We're delighted to be able to start working hard for this city," Carrier said. "We've been waiting for it for awhile now, but we're going to do our darnedest to make sure we do the very best for Cannon



Submitted Photo

Exterior of the Cannon Beach Visitor Center in summer. The chamber hopes to boost tourism throughout the year.

Beach. We want this to work out well for them."

Concerns about length of contract

The council's decision was unanimous, but there was talk concerning the length of the contract. City Councilor George Vetter said he felt the period from October to June 2017 isn't long enough. Despite being a small town, the chamber has 270 paid members, he noted, adding the city should "show them more confidence."

Carrier said chamber staff and board members have been waiting on the contract's approval to ensure they had the funds needed to complete tasks.

He noted it will be "challenging to make a mark" in the set time frame, but that staff are prepared to do their best.

City Manager Brant Kucera said a short contract could be advantageous for both parties. He pointed to disagreements over Tillamook County's 1 percent room tax increase revenue.

"I think that shows you right there that a relationship can quickly, although not expected here ... devolve into two parties fighting over revenues," he said.

He added a year and a half is enough time for the chamber "to show us that they're using this money in a fashion that was envisioned."

An incentive to work together

City Councilor Mike Benefield said the shorter time frame will give both parties either incentive to make the contract work with the increased funds involved, or a chance to walk away if the partnership doesn't work out.

"Who wants to be stuck in a long-term contract and not be happy with your partner? And that works both ways," he said.

The contract may be terminated by either party "for any reason" with a 90 day advance written warning.

Mayor Sam Steidel suggested doing an evaluation of the chamber's performance at the end of the contract to determine whether or not to continue it.

'Make tomorrow better than today'

Gearhart support classroom helps students find new ways to achieve success

By KATHERINE LACAZE
EO Media Group

GEARHART — Seaside School District teacher Jennifer Glasson and her team believe students can be successful, and it is the responsibility of educators to remove obstacles to achievement.

That philosophy guides the Learning Center Support Station, started this year in a portable classroom at Gearhart Elementary School to provide an alternative learning environment for kindergarten through fifth-grade students with challenging behaviors.

Everyday, Glasson and fellow teachers Mary Foust and Angela Dilley collaborate with each other and the students in the support station, a specially designed classroom, to discover "what is getting in the way" of a student's success and then find "ways to make tomorrow better than today was," Glasson said.

Primarily, the team is focused on building relationships with the students and being the relentless champions they need to change bad behaviors, she said.

"It's a social competencies classroom, because that's what the behaviors are

impeding," Glasson said. "Our ultimate goal is to give them tools to overcome the obstacles preventing them from being in the general education room."

In the past, elementary students with behavioral or emotional challenges who were on individualized education programs were being suspended regularly, having their days at public school shortened or receiving a lot of in-home tutoring as responses to disruptions. There were not many options, Gearhart Elementary School Principal Juli Wozniak said. "We just felt like there had to be a better answer."

Hoping for a more long-term, mutually beneficial solution, the district created a classroom with an environment where students could receive more attention, specialized education, the opportunity to focus on behavior and the chance to try again multiple times.

Preparing the classroom

The Astoria and Warrenton-Hammond school districts both have specialized classroom settings, which Seaside staff visited to get ideas for their Learning Center Support Station. The group then researched different aspects of the problem, including how trauma can create behavioral and emotional challenges for students and what sensory stimuli exacerbate negative behaviors. They also looked into different curriculum, classroom structures, reinforcement systems and more.

State forecast paints rosy picture of revenues

By HILLARY BORRUD
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Oregon economists have painted a rosy picture for the state's revenues and economy over the next two years.

Economists said they expect the state's economy will continue at "full throttle" for another year or two, as the post-recession recovery continues.

"For the last couple years, we have been becoming more optimistic about the (2015-2017) biennium," state economist Mark McMullen said during a forecast Wednesday morning.

Oregon's economists expect the state will receive \$56 million more in general fund and lottery revenues in the current biennium than they had projected in the summer, when lawmakers were drafting the budget. The latest forecast is for \$19.5 billion in total state revenues.

McMullen said the strong revenue forecast for the current two-year budget meant lawmakers would not have to adjust their revenue expectations at this point.

"I wish the same could be said on the spending side," McMullen said.

Not surprising

"This report is not full of surprises, which generally means we like it," said state Rep. Phil Barnhart, D-Eugene, chairman of the House Interim Committee on Revenue. Lawmakers on the state House and Senate revenue committees held a joint meeting to hear the economic and revenue forecasts and other reports.

It could still take another year for the number of jobs in Oregon to catch up to the number of workers, said senior economist Josh Lehner. Lehner and McMullen said the lack of affordable housing — particularly in the Portland metropolitan area, Hood River and Bend — and weakness in the manufacturing sector could be signals of future problems for the state's economy.

Lehner said housing affordability is now a problem "for people up and down the spectrum."

Less optimistic about future years

Lawmakers and the state economists spent little time discussing the less rosy outlook beyond the current two year budget. In 2017 through 2019, economists projected that general fund and lottery revenues could decrease by \$47.5 million.

Gov. Kate Brown said in a press release that she will continue to monitor the revenue outlook.

"The forecast is more than a number, it directly correlates to state government's ability to support the health of our schools, resiliency of our communities, and growth of our businesses large and small," Brown said. "While the forecast is stable through this biennium, I am watching carefully to make sure we are able to respond nimbly and appropriately should the landscape change."

House Minority Leader Mike McLane, R-Powell Butte, said the state should approach the forecast with "cautious optimism."

"While our state's economy continues to expand, it's now doing so at a slower rate,"

he said in a statement. "And with key economic indicators warning of potential problems ahead, the prospects of continued growth are anything but certain."

"Oregonians have worked hard to bring our state back from the depths of the Great Recession, but long-term economic expansion continues to be hindered by burdensome government mandates and the threat of massive tax increases. As serious financial challenges loom yet again, we must pursue policies that will incentivize private-sector development and bring new family-wage jobs to Oregon, not ones that drive them away."

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Parks tour offers glimpse into Astoria's challenge

The Daily Astorian

The city is leading a field trip through parks on Saturday to help develop a parks master plan.

The bus tour starts at 9 a.m. at the Astoria Aquatic Center and is scheduled to end back at the center at 4 p.m. Parks staff have said up to 40 people can go on the tour, with registration information available online at http://www.astoria-parks.com/dept/Parks_Recreation.

"This is a great opportunity to get a deeper understanding of the opportunities and challenges facing the Astoria Parks and Recreation Department," Angela Cosby, the department's director, said in an email.

The department has also invited the public to take an online master plan survey that will be available until Jan. 1.

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