

Chief: Levy allocated is only for a single employee and vehicle

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myriad responsibilities: "If you can shoot it, tase it or cuff it, call the cops," Stearns said. "Fire does everything else."

"My first day here, we got dispatched for a tree across the highway," Stearns said. "Where I come from, I thought, 'why are we going out on a tree?'"

The reason quickly became clear — if the fire department didn't remove the tree, it might affect their ability to effectively respond to a call in that area. The nearly all-volunteer Cannon Beach Fire Department also assists in water rescues, emergency medical responses and more.

But the desired qualifications for a new chief go well beyond his competence in the field. Board members said they wanted someone who could write grants, inspire volunteers, handle a slate of administrative duties, interface with the community and more.

"I think in a department this size you need everybody to be response capable," Stearns said. "When the whistle blows, we're all firefighters. The administration side has



Andrew Tonry/For EO Media Group Cannon Beach Rural Fire Protection District Board member Garry Smith, left, and interim Chief Jim Stearns discuss hiring a new fire chief.

to be done confidently and well."

"We need somebody who does both," said board President Sharon Clyde.

Another qualification: a smooth, reassuring presence.

"Public relations is going to be huge for a while," Stearns said in a nod to the continued public furor over the firing of previous Chief Mike Balzer and the ensuing recall effort.

Filling the post

Stearns and the board also

discussed different ways to fill the position. Under consideration are a full-time chief fluent with administrative work, and part-time chief with administrative support.

However, the tax levy funding the chief's salary is only allocated for a single employee — the chief.

"To earmark those for just one position and a vehicle, you've kind of tied yourself down," Stearns told the board. The levy remains in place until 2017.

Stearns also discussed with

the board the ups and downs of hiring in this particular locale.

"We're going to attract a chief to a small department like this that's either a first time chief and using this as a stepping stone," Stearns said. "Or you get somebody on the way down that's wanting to retire on the Oregon Coast but not ready to quit working. That could be a wonderful find, but it's got to be the right find."

"I think you're not going to attract a mid-career person here at that salary range," Stearns added. The full-time salary offered is in the neighborhood of \$70,000, which doesn't include an additional \$35,000-to-\$40,000 spent on insurance and benefits.

Stearns and the board hope to officially announce the opening Feb. 1. On this timeline they will advertise until March 15, and begin interviews in mid-April.

From his connections with fire departments throughout the state, Stearns has already been queried about the opening.

"We've got three viable candidates already interested in the position," Stearns said. "I think we'll have a whole lot more."



Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian The Astoria City Council voted Tuesday night to reject a new 150-foot Verizon monopole in Shively Park.

Tower: Council found simulation inaccurate

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Narrow votes

In a series of 3-2 votes, the City Council found that Verizon's initial photo simulations of the monopole at Shively Park were inaccurate and could have influenced approvals by the Historic Landmarks Commission and Planning Commission. The council also held that the monopole should not be linked to the new tower at Reservoir Ridge. The council determined that the monopole would have a substantial adverse impact on Shively Park.

City Councilors Zetty Nemlowill, Drew Herzig and Cindy Price indicated they would grant the appeals of Ron Zilli, a forester who lives near Shively Park and identified flaws in the project. Mayor Arline LaMear and Councilor Russ Warr voted to deny the appeals.

Final votes are expected in early February after city planning staff drafts findings for the council to sustain Zilli's appeals.

"I think there was a fatal flaw in the process — deceptive photo simulations," Nemlowill said. "The proposed cell tower is not compatible with a historic park and would result in substantial adverse impacts."

"And I agree with Mr. Zilli that the proposed cell tower does not conform to the development code and should be denied."

But Warr said the monopole at Shively Park was part of a package the city had sought for years to help upgrade emergency communications. The city had worked with Friends of the Astoria Column and Converge Communications, a Portland telecommunications firm, to help convince Verizon to move off Coxcomb Hill and away from the Astoria Column, the city's most popular tourist destination. Verizon would use the new tower at Reservoir Ridge, equipment atop the Astor Hotel, and the monopole at Shively Park to provide wireless coverage across the city.

"So turning this down has a much larger impact than

just turning down a cellphone tower," Warr said. "And I believe that it's detrimental to the larger community. And so I disagree."

LaMear was also concerned about the practical consequences of the council's votes. Ruling out Coxcomb Hill and Shively Park could complicate plans for a new tower that would improve cellphone coverage for residents who suffer through spotty service.

"We're running out of hills," the mayor said.

Verizon had argued that Shively Park was the consensus location, but Herzig said "there are other options. This is not the only option of a location for a cellphone tower."

Price said the monopole at Shively Park was strongly linked with the new tower at Reservoir Ridge, making it difficult to independently consider the merits of the Shively Park location.

Had Verizon asked for a spot at Shively Park only to improve wireless coverage, without the project being tied to the city's emergency communications needs, she believes "that would have been rejected out of hand."

A tranquil park

Zilli had accused the city of bias because of the agreement with Verizon and the \$90,000 the City Council had authorized to cover the work of the private telecommunications consultant. He had unsuccessfully sought a change of venue for his appeals.

The City Council had made it clear after approving the agreement with Verizon last year that elements of the deal, such as the monopole at Shively Park, would have to undergo review by the Historic Landmarks Commission and Planning Commission and that any approvals could be appealed.

Zilli told councilors Tuesday night that a 150-foot monopole would be out of character and would interfere with views in a tranquil, historic city park.

"They've really just tried to stuff a square peg in a round hole to broker the deal with this whole thing," he said.

Port: Agency has 50 days worth of cash, investments in reserve

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The agency increased its personnel costs by \$177,000 to more than \$2.3 million by hiring Executive Director Jim Knight and other staff. Lanzarotta said the Port is at its highest staffing level in five years, adding that more staff can help earn more revenue, such as newly hired Property Manager Shane Jensen helping the Port catch up on outdated leases.

How the Port stacks up

Lanzarotta compared the Port with 24 other West Coast ports scaled to an equivalent financial size, including larger entities such as the Port of Olympia, Washington, and Stockton, California.

"The good news is, you're getting to a positive bottom line, but you're not on par with other ports," he said, comparing the Port's \$1 million in net income against a \$2 million average for common-sized ports.

The Port appeared both haggard and resourceful compared to peers, netting \$588,000 from operations and only costing Clatsop County taxpayers \$658,000, while common-sized ports lost on average \$1.1 million from operations and collected \$1 million from their taxing districts. Lanzarotta, asked by Port Commissioner Stephen Fulton whether the Port should cut its tax burden further to send a positive public message, said he sees value in county residents being invested in the Port.

Hurting the Port most is its inconsistent grant revenue. Even in an up year, the Port secured only \$724,106 in grant money, compared to an average of more than \$2.6 million at common-sized ports.

The Port also spends about \$600,000 less on depreciation expenses compared to common-sized ports. "That tells me you're not investing in capital assets to the extent other ports are," Lanzarotta said.

Five years ago, Lanzarotta said, the Port didn't have enough liquid assets on hand to last 10 days and had to use lines of credit to cover its bills. Now the Port has built up about 50 days, or \$1.1 million, worth of cash and investments in reserve. Common-sized ports held more than \$3 million in reserve, and Lanzarotta said the Port should build its self-sufficiency to at least 90 days.

Big strides

In fiscal year 2014's audit, the Port had also shown big strides from previous years. But after auditors accounted for \$1.9 million in potential pollution cleanup costs the Port had not, the agency's net position still decreased by \$7,789.

Lanzarotta said the Port received an unmodified — or clean — opinion from his office this year and is nearing the ability to provide all of its own accurate financials without the help of outside consultants such as CFO Selections, hired by Knight to help

right the agency's financials and prepare for Moss Adams' audits.

The Port's audit still included several negative findings, most prominently a severe material weakness in the awarding of public contracts.

The Port, improving its Pier 1 offices for Customs, allowed Astoria company Rickenbach Construction to complete more than \$500,000 in work without a competitive bidding process. Jim Grey, the Port's finance manager, said the Port didn't initially realize so much work



Jim Knight

was needed to accommodate Customs until it was in the middle of the remodel. The Port also failed to produce a change-of-work order needed to justify a written contract for \$10,000 that turned into \$93,000 worth of work. Grey said the Port has a change-of-work order for environmental engineering company Maul Foster Alongi, expanding its role in helping the Port create a plan to clean up petroleum contamination, but could not find the paperwork for auditors.

Port staff also failed to provide the necessary paperwork justifying a lack of public bidding for bulk purchases of petroleum, and for allowing one tenant to continue providing services for several years without going out for a competitive bid as required.

In a more common finding to small agencies with limited financial staffs, the Port faced a significant deficiency in separation of financial duties. But Lanzarotta said Port staff have made substantive efforts to solve that and other issues and recommendations raised by auditors.

Fixing the finances

Fiscal year 2015's audit is part of a continuing effort by Port staff to tighten the agency's operations and improve its reputation.

The Port's audit from fiscal year 2014 had come in about six months late, as the agency questioned and reviewed the accuracy of its financials under Finance Director Colleen Browne, who was fired by Knight shortly after his arrival in October 2014. Knight then replaced her with Grey, who worked for the Columbia River Maritime Museum and Columbia Memorial Hospital, and added Staff Accountant Will Isom.

The Port contracted Barbara Blue of Bussert Law & Associates in August to scour through the financials back to June 30, 2013, and a year ago CFO Selections and Moss Adams.

The Port met the Dec. 31 deadline for turning over its fiscal year 2015 audit to the state, and Lanzarotta said at the current rate, the Port will have next year's audit in by the end of November, in time for the Port Commission to review it before the document heads to the state.

Roley: Her retirement is effective June 30

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Roley wrote she is leaving "with confidence that our students will continue to be served by dedicated and talented educators, including teachers, support staff and administrators, and by a school board who has always had the best interest of students as the only real item on the agenda."

"Thank you for your unwavering support for all of us and for allowing me to be part of this special school community," Roley wrote.

Dougherty, who is good friends with Roley, said her retirement did not come as a surprise, as they discussed it in prior conversations.

Even still, she has meant a lot to the district, he said. After working as a teacher in the Seattle area, Roley started in Seaside as a science teacher



Daily Astorian/File Photo Class of 2014 graduate Parker Riser gives Principal Sheila Roley a big hug while making his way across the stage after receiving his diploma during Seaside High School's 98th Commencement Exercise at the Seaside Civic and Convention Center.

at Broadway Middle School. Then she completed the process to get her administrator license.

When Dougherty became superintendent for the district in 1998, he said, he selected

her to replace him as the principal of Cannon Beach Elementary School and the kindergarten through 12th grade curriculum director. She then became principal of the mid-

dle school before moving into the position of high school principal in July 2007.

"(Roley) is one of those rare people who is unflappable," Dougherty said. "She clearly always has the school and students mind."


Whatever is happening at her school, whether it is working on last-minute reports or dealing with student and staff issues, she is "always focused on the right thing," Dougherty said. Additionally, she is "one of those people who every school district looks to."

Not only has she been a mentor within the Seaside School District, but she's served that role in other districts, as well, he said.

The process to find her replacement will start soon, Dougherty, who announced his own retirement late last year, said.

The regular monthly meeting of the
Tillicum Foundation (KMUN)
will be meeting
January 27th at 5:00pm
at The Tillicum House,
1445 Exchange.

Meetings are open to the public
and visitors are welcome.



Enter your baby in The
Daily Astorian's Cutest Baby
Contest for 2015

If your baby was born between Jan 1st
& Dec 31st of 2015, you can submit your
newborn's picture either via email at
classifieds@dailyastorian.com or drop by
one of our offices in Astoria or Seaside
and we can scan in the photo for you.

Deadline to enter is Tuesday,
January 26th at 5:00 pm.
Entries will be printed in The
Daily Astorian on January 29th.

