

Gearhart market seeks to make transition to brew pub

Market couldn't compete, but owners hope café will succeed

By R.J. MARX
The Daily Astorian

SEASIDE — Terry and Molly Lowenberg, owners of the Gearhart Grocery and Sum Properties in Seaside, want to expand on their business with a restaurant, brew pub and specialty market.

They say there is “not a public need” for a grocery store in the location, but there “may be a need for an additional food service option” for Gearhart residents and visitors.

Their application will undergo public comment before the Planning Commission Thursday at 6 p.m. at Gearhart City Hall.

If the plans are approved, the grocery store would close and the interior space would be remodeled for a brew pub and deli business, according to findings presented by city staff.

The grocery store has been for sale for over two years and has struggled to compete with regional grocers north and south of Gearhart, the report stated.

The 4,100-square-foot building has two existing street entrances. The applicant proposes interior improvements to add a brew area with four beer tanks, two restrooms, nine dining tables seating 36 customers plus four bar stools at the deli. The rear part of the building contains the stock area, a meat smoker and a freezer unit.

“In addition to the competition, demand for a local grocer in Gearhart is significantly diminished



R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian

The Gearhart Grocery presented plans to the Planning Commission for a brew pub and café.

in the winter months,” the city’s staff report noted. “The reuse of an existing building for a better business opportunity could prove to ensure a stable and healthy city center business district.”

The brew pub proposes to serve wine and locally brewed craft beer and to provide a deli for customers to either dine or to take out.

While there are other empty storefronts in the neighboring commercial zone, none have an existing kitchen, septic capacity and space for dining, restrooms and brewing.

“Changing the use from a small grocery store to a cafe will reduce morning noise impacts and extend evening noise impacts to 10 p.m.,” the report stated.

There may be “odoriferous impacts” from the meat smoker, the report added.

In their review, city staff sought to determine if the proposed use is consistent with the city’s comprehensive plan policies, some of which limit or discourage development and seek to prevent the city from becoming a tourist destination.

Since this is an existing structure, it does not need to meet off-street parking rules. “If a new café wanted to come into town, they would need parking,” City Manager Chad Sweet said. “We made an exception for existing structures.”

After Thursday’s public hearing, the Planning Commission will make a decision on the conditional use permit and add any conditions they deem necessary, Sweet said. If the decision is appealed, it could go to the City Council for review, he added.

Seaside Chamber, executive director sever relationship

Technology skills drove decision, president says

By R.J. MARX
The Daily Astorian

SEASIDE — Executive Director Susan Huntington and the Seaside Chamber of Commerce have severed their relationship, chamber President Brian Owen announced Friday.



Susan Huntington

Huntington was hired in March 2013. “It was time for the chamber to look for somebody with more experience with technical fields,” Owen said. “We would like to see more technology forward interfacing with our membership, more on the website, more Twitter-type products, more Facebook connectivity. It’s there, but it needs to be taken to the next level.”

Owen said the board and Huntington “left on good terms.”

“I truly appreciate where she brought us moving us into new events. She really ramped where we were and I really hope to work on the building blocks she helped create.”

Huntington could not immediately be reached for comment.

Owen said the chamber would look for a new executive director active in their community who can bring in those skill sets, and “bringing some energy, some enthusiasm to that technical side.” “We have a great connection with our businesses. It’s time to do more things like the visitors’ center is doing with their online applications, with their connectivity, client-based, business or businesses.”

The board will meet to put together a time frame for the hiring process.

He said the Seaside Downtown Development Association, which is also in the process of looking for a new director, has found a “good group” of candidates and anticipates success in filling the role. Salary details were not available, he said.

Lawmakers want special session to avoid corporate tax ballot

By KRISTENA HANSEN
Associated Press

SALEM — An aggressive proposal by labor unions to raise taxes on the biggest corporations doing business in Oregon is headed for the November ballot, and some lawmakers are talking about calling a special session to find an alternative.

With the legislative session over, a special session is the only viable way to hash

out a compromise in lieu of the ballot proposal. Some lawmakers say they’re willing to do that, but they haven’t been able to get both sides — the proposal’s labor union-backers and the big corporations it would affect — to come to the negotiating table.

State Sen. Mark Hass, D-Beaverton, introduced an alternative plan at the beginning of the session as a conversation-starter, but it never

went anywhere. He said some businesses and private-sector unions recently expressed interest in compromise but not nearly enough to justify a special session.

“It’s now an appropriate time to focus on the potential for World War III in this campaign, unless people can come together and lay down the sword,” Hass told The Associated Press. “Business brands are going to be damaged, the brands of public unions are

going to be damaged, regardless of who wins.”

The ballot proposal, Initiative Petition 28, would require big businesses with \$25 million in sales to pay a minimum \$30,000 tax, plus 2.5 percent on anything above that sales threshold. It poses a significant boon for the state budget, with revenue expected to jump by \$5.2 billion during the upcoming 2017-19 cycle.

Republicans and businesses strongly oppose the

petition, but sentiments are somewhat mixed among Democrats, who control both chambers and often lean with unions on certain issues.

State House Speaker Tina Kotek, D-Portland, said she’s “personally supportive” of the measure because the revenue boost could help meet the needs of many public agencies and services.

Hass and other Democrats worry a bitter and costly fight between unions

and businesses would only deepen the cultural and political divides that shape many policy decisions at the Legislature.

“That’ll be a bloodbath,” Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, told reporters Thursday. “That could be another very bad battle, a brutal, brutal battle that will divide us. And whoever wins doesn’t win for long because the wounds will take us years and years to get over.”

Catfish, bass, walleye catch limits eliminated

Associated Press

VANCOUVER, Wash. — Washington state officials have eliminated the size and daily catch limits on Columbia River catfish, bass and walleye.

State fishery officials made the decision last week for the portion of the Columbia River shared with Oregon. Oregon’s rule deregulating the fishery went into place on Jan. 1.

Washington state has also eliminated limits for bass, channel catfish and walleye on nearly two dozen Washington tributaries as well.

Fish and Wildlife officials say the goal of deregulation is to increase the harvest of those non-native fish species.



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DR. EDWARD HARVEY HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARD

The City of Astoria Historic Landmarks Commission is seeking nominations for the Dr. Edward Harvey Historic Preservation Award. The award is presented each year to recognize a property owner who has completed exterior restoration or beautification of a building which exemplifies the historical attributes of the building or the architectural heritage of Astoria. The work must have been completed within the last two years. Nominations may include residential, commercial, public, and other types of buildings.

The awards will be presented by the Mayor to celebrate National Historic Preservation Week in May.

Anyone wishing to submit a nomination should contact Sherri Williams at the City of Astoria, <mailto:swilliams@astoria.or.us> / 338-5183, or send a nomination (no form required) to the Community Development Department, City of Astoria, 1095 Duane Street, Astoria OR 97103. Nominations must be received no later than 5:00 pm on April 15, 2016.





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