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Thank you, Dianne Widdop

Gearhart mayor had the toughness to endure adversity

Being a public official in 2016 is not a cakewalk. Even in some small towns, city councillors and mayors have found themselves in the crosshairs. Gearhart Mayor Dianne Widdop is an excellent example of what happens when bitter, divisive community controversy knocks at the city hall door.

When Widdop announced her retirement from office last week, she said she would no longer be “in the hot seat.” And a hot seat it has been. Widdop was the object of a recall, which she handily survived. She has also dealt with the protracted dispute over the Neacoxie Barn, a special events property. And she leaves as two other issues are reaching boiling points: short-term rentals and the future of the Gearhart Grocery.

There is a specific point and a more general lesson in Widdop’s public life in Gearhart. In various capacities, she has served the town since 1993. That is a lot of time in evening meetings.

Widdop has the toughness that allowed her to persevere in prolonged adversity. At the same time, she is an engaging personality who seeks the opinions of others. Her Wednesday morning coffees with the mayor made her quite accessible.

The more general point is that our communities depend absolutely on good people serving on volunteer boards and being candidates for election. Many would say the fun went out of public service several years ago. That’s one reason why it is harder to find good candidates.

That’s why it is excellent news that Matt Brown is showing interest in running for Gearhart mayor.

Latest tsunami science urges long-term action

We won’t know what a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake and tsunami are like until we’ve experienced them. But considering the consequences, we’re fools if we don’t take reasonable long-term steps to mitigate the damage.

U.S. Sen. Maria Cantwell’s recent workshop meeting in Long Beach, Washington, overflowed with disturbing information, including the latest scientific modeling estimates from Dr. Christopher Sabine, director of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratories in Seattle. His statements and maps were drawn specifically for the Long Beach Peninsula, but the scenario he outlined is generally applicable to low-elevation communities up and down the coast.

Drawing in part upon data gleaned from the 2011 disaster in Japan, Sabine’s lab suggests the land surface could drop as much as two to four meters or 6.5 to 13 feet as the subduction zone releases centuries of pent-up motion and ocean waters rush in. Until now, discussion has centered on a worst-case figure about half as much.

The first in a resulting series of several tsunamis —

in effect giant ripples in the ocean — could approach a height of 60 feet right along the seashore. The aftereffects of so much water will transform the landscape.

Damage elsewhere in the region means survivors on the coast face a long wait for help.

Cantwell, a Washington Democrat, examined the site of a proposed vertical evacuation structure in Long Beach — basically a tower with a refuge on top. The new research suggests the current design isn’t tall enough. The potential for a lengthy time before rescue urges a strong need to incorporate basic water, food and first-aid supplies.

Discussions suggested a need for dozens of these structures along the low-lying coast. Obtaining funds is almost unimaginable and such an enterprise could turn into a major boondoggle.

The latest subduction theories also reinforce the idea that Columbia River estuary communities are at grave risk for major inundation.

We all hope for something far less than the worst prospects laid out by scientists. However, moving forward, there are many conservative and pragmatic steps that can be taken on a generational timescale to begin lessening the potential death toll.

An appreciation of the local grocery

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

BY
R.J.
MARX



Every town should have one. In Los Angeles, a city of neighborhoods, we lived on Mar Vista’s Beethoven Street. The Beethoven Market was the place to go. Whenever our then 5-year-old son wanted candy, chips or simply got bored, we would stroll down the hill. It was the place to go for coffee, smokes if you smoked, milk, half-and-half and everything else you would need in a pinch.

A terrifying moment came when I was teaching Sam to ride a bike. Lesson learned: never teach a kid to ride a bike going downhill. At breakneck speed I tackled him and the bike onto the grass before heading into traffic on Las Palmas. But we went to that grocery every day and never came away empty-handed.

Thus I can understand the poignancy of the closing of the Gearhart Grocery. Gearhart residents received the news their beloved market would be giving way to another barrel-and-oak establishment, a brew pub and smoked-meat deli, a sudsy version of the venerable Oregon jerky shop.

Although we’ve been here a little less than a year, we go to the Gearhart Grocery every day. I love getting Buoy Beer Czech Pilsner in the big bottles and the fact that they have Lange pinot noir. Along with turkey sandwiches, egg salad and more, all on your choice of breads. My favorite is “Dave’s Killer.” Their desserts never disappoint, with a small but delicious selection of pies and cakes.

The grocery store, owned by Molly and Terry Lowenberg of Sum Properties, has been for sale for over two years, struggling unsuccessfully to compete with Safeway, Costco and Fred Meyer.

If their plans move forward, the grocery would close and the interior remodeled. Meats will be smoked and beers brewed on-site. Families will be served at the nine tables, separated from a brewing area visible through a glassed area. “It’s really more deli than beer,” engineer Mark Mead of Mead Engineering Resources, representing the owners, told Gearhart planning commissioners at a March meeting.

The owners have “been trying to figure out what to put in place of the store, and this is what they came up with,” Mead said.

Mead said the owner felt the brew



Submitted Photo
The Gearhart Grocery in an undated photo from “Gearhart Remembered: An Informal History.”

Maybe the little corner store is the part of us that has never changed since we first stretched out our arms to put a nickel on the counter.

pub was needed “because there wasn’t one in Gearhart itself.”

“I would love to have some place to get dinner,” Planning Commissioner Virginia Dideum said. “This would be good for the community.” Dideum was joined by Richard Owsley, Russ Taggard and Carl Anderson in supporting the plan.

Commissioners David Smith, Terry Graff and Jeremy Davis voted against the brew pub, citing the comprehensive plan’s dictum: “The city will prevent the city from becoming a tourist destination.”

Opinions were divided: Baby Ruth and Snickers bars versus a growler refill. Bottom line was, opponents couldn’t find a compelling enough reason to stop it, at least not according to the report submitted by Planner Carole Connell.

In weeks and days to come, the market became topic No. 1 in Gearhart, supplanting the Neacoxie Barn and even the short-term rental debate. It was clear: You were either for us, or against us.

A postcard questionnaire was mailed to homeowners and asked:

“Do you want Gearhart Store to be a Beer Pub? NO. Yes.”

“Reverse the comprehensive plan so Gearhart becomes more like Seaside? NO. Yes.”

“Do you want overnight vacation rentals in our R-1 residential zones? NO. Yes.”

It’s pretty clear where that one is headed.

Passions run so high grocery employee Alyssa Logan deliv-

ered an impassioned Facebook plea Monday:

“All of us at Gearhart Grocery love our community members, whether they frequent our store or not,” Logan wrote. “While we know that a brew pub will not replace grocery needs, we do believe it would be a great asset to the community. The fact of the matter is, that although people love us, they do not shop here nearly enough for us to be a successful, profitable business. This is what community members need to keep in mind when weighing the idea of a new business. As a store, we provide beer, wine and hard sodas — exactly what a brew pub would offer.”

“While Gearhart is notorious for its tight restrictions, I do not believe that the potential brew pub violates any of these,” Logan continued. “Every complaint we have heard, whether it be negative or positive, has been emotionally charged and inconsiderate of the business owners and buyers. By appealing or being unsupportive of this transition, you are also being unsupportive of your fellow community members.”

“While we appreciate the community’s concern, we hope that this open letter will give community members a fresh perspective and enough additional information to allow supportive attitudes and decrease the negativity while we move forward.”

Maybe the little corner store is the part of us that has never changed since we first stretched out our arms to put a nickel on the counter. It’s the same argument playing out with short-term rentals. It is the world slipping away.

We love Ken’s Market in Seaside. We go there when we don’t even need anything and always buy something.

Cannon Beach Hardware, aka Screw & Brew, is one of my top five destinations in midtown Cannon Beach. You’ve got your brew, but you’ve also got your hardware and supplies.

I stopped by Bud’s on 101 in Gearhart, and could buy a quart of milk and a clam gun. Longtime residents may take that for granted, but I sure don’t.

R.J. Marx is *The Daily Astorian’s* South County reporter and editor of *the Seaside Signal* and *Cannon Beach Gazette*.

GUEST COLUMN

Trauma informed care transformed a school

By SUE CODY
Special to *The Daily Astorian*

“It takes a village to raise a child,” says Dr. David Labby. “It takes a strong village when dealing with people who have had a lot of trauma.” Labby is the retired chief medical officer of Health Share of Oregon and will sit on a panel after the free community showing of “Paper Tigers” Tuesday at the Liberty Theater.

Labby says he hasn’t seen the documentary film that follows students at Lincoln High School in Walla Walla, Washington, but he does have experience in trauma informed care that takes into account adverse childhood experiences.

“Paper Tigers” has reached national acclaim as a successful example of implementing trauma informed care by taking into account adverse childhood experiences and improving truancy rates, drug use, abuse and graduation rates.

Jill Quackenbush, Clatsop County’s prevention coordinator and a member of the Way to Wellville Advisory Council’s Emotional Health Team, has been aware of adverse childhood experiences for 15 years. As the team identified focus areas such as suicide, addiction and mental illness, the issue came into play.

“Around the time we were coming up with a big plan, the film ‘Paper

Tigers’ was advertised as being available,” she said.

“Through Way to Wellville, we applied for a grant from Providence Health & Services to show the film. They were willing to support our efforts and helped us reach our goal for the community. We are really happy about that.”

This film is for everyone interested in children and transforming society, Quackenbush says. “It is possible to improve relationships with teens.”

Labby and colleagues studied 50 high users of the health care system to create a system of care for Medicaid patients. They interviewed people living under bridges, on the streets and others in the Portland metro area.

“These people had extremely troubled lives,” Labby says. “Most had a series of adverse events that left them marginalized, isolated and with many mental and physical problems.”

“We were interested in what we can do to help struggling families. We wanted to move upstream. Where the parents lack jobs, have substance abuse or use violence, the kids are neglected or abused. Struggling families can’t take care of their kids.

“We found that a cascade of things happens when the children grow up, such as substance abuse, homelessness or jail.”

“It is clear we need to look through the adversity lens,” Labby says. By treating children through trauma



Sue Cody

informed care, they have a better chance of graduating high school and getting a better job. Studies show high school graduates have better health.

Labby says the metro area has a lot to learn about Clatsop County. “There is a lot of engagement and opportunity in urban areas,” he says. “It is possible to bring partners to the table for a group of visionary leaders in a smaller community. Perhaps the smaller communities can show the way.”

Quackenbush says, “When we look at services, instead of asking, ‘What’s wrong with you?’ we ask, ‘What happened to you?’ By using such strategies, we can learn how to treat each other in all places, not just practitioners and patients, but kids in school, coaches and players, colleagues in the workplace, parents and children. We all come to the table with baggage that influences how we react and internalize processing. We can become trauma sensitive.”

“I am excited about showing this documentary.” Resources from Trauma Informed Oregon, The Harbor, Northwest Parenting, CASA and others will be available at the 6 p.m. showing. The panel discussion starts at 7:45 p.m.

There will be counselors, mental health professionals and people who work in behavioral health ready to talk to anyone who needs to talk. “The intent is to have ‘safe’ people at the showing, so if anyone’s trauma is triggered by the film, they will have someone to talk to,” Quackenbush says.

Copies of the documentary will be available to schools and others through Way to Wellville and the Northwest Education Service District.

Sue Cody, a former deputy managing editor at *The Daily Astorian*, works with the *Way to Wellville*.