

Zoo hand raises tiger cub to save its life

Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — The zookeepers at the Milwaukee County Zoo are hand-raising a lone Amur tiger cub — an unusual undertaking only done in order to save the cub's life.

Vets and zookeepers had to give special one-on-one care to then-10-pound cub named Kashtan after he developed an

infection that killed one of his three sisters. They had considered returning him after about a week, but they didn't trust mother Amba would allow him to be removed five times a day for feedings.

After he recovered about a month later, they didn't know if Amba would still recognize him or if she would protect her other cubs because he had been sick, said Katie

Kuhn, area supervisor of Big Cat Country at the Milwaukee County Zoo.

It's not ideal but the zoo's vet, Dr. Vickie Clyde, said then-four-week old Kashtan would have died if they had not removed him. And his situation helped with early detection of the same infection in his sister Bernadette that allowed her to stay with Amba and sister Eloise.



The Amur tiger cub Kashtan looks at a camera at the Milwaukee County Zoo in Milwaukee. AP Photo/Carrie Antfinger



Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian

The invasive species Scotch broom grows on the beach of Gearhart, seen here along the Fire Trail on Tuesday in Gearhart. The plant has expanded growth along the beach over the years and the city is looking at options to remove some of it.

Gearhart: 'This site is probably never going to be what it once was'

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Bowman has located campers, college students and homeless people staying in secluded areas in the dunes. It took him several days to find three people living in the area.

Gearhart Fire Chief Bill Eddy said he has watched the vegetation on the dunes grow over the past 20 years.

If a fire occurred in the dunes, the Fire Department would not enter the area because "the fuel load is so great out there that you don't want to get anywhere close to it."

"This site is probably never going to be what it once was, but it can be a managed natural landscape that works for safety, fire, city and animals,

too," said panel participant Vanessa Blackstone, wildlife biologist with the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department.

Panel participant Neal Maine, naturalist and former science teacher, said a plan should involve figuring out the city's "ecological umbrella."

Luke Colvin, certified arborist and panel participant, said the trees would continue to grow quickly if left alone.

Management plan

Families and volunteers have pulled out Scotch broom in the area in past years, but the efforts have not made a major difference. A plan for managing the vegetation could be a "fight against Mother Nature" but is an option, Sweet said.

Managing the dunes would likely require a city code amendment. The dunes are in an overlay district, which requires that plants are not cut by more than 50 percent. The city could include an exception in the code that might allow further vegetation management if the council approves a report by a certified professional.

Potential changes would go through a public process at Planning Commission and City Council meetings.

"We're just trying to learn something," Sweet said. "We don't have a policy yet."

Some citizens expressed concerns about disrupting birds and wildlife in the area with potential management methods, such as mowing and

herbicide spraying.

Sayce said management would be seasonally specific and not during nesting season.

Though some species will lose while others will benefit from the vegetation management, the species that use the area are common, not endangered, Blackstone said.

No cost estimates are known, but some mentioned the possibility of obtaining grants.

"I believe we have an opportunity," Marino said.

Fort Stevens Park Manager Justin Parker, another panel participant, said Oregon Parks and Recreation would be open to partnering with Gearhart on a dune vegetation project. "We definitely want to be a resource," he said.

Warrenton: 'We're just trying to stop major transactions happening without voters agreeing'

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The City Commission had publicly opposed the measure, arguing that it would tie their hands and impede routine city business. But proponents — who had to pass the measure by a double majority — said they wanted a voice in whether the city disposed of important assets.

"Our intent was, we're just trying to stop major transactions happening without voters agreeing," said Scott Widcombe, a resident who helped put the petition together.

Ken Yuill, the chief petitioner, said the initiative began as a response to the city's controversial, and ultimately shelved, 2014 proposal to trade a section of Tansy Point to Warrenton Fiber.

Unintended consequences

Measure 4-181, however, doesn't just refer to real estate but to leases, infrastructure, tangible physical assets and other broad categories.

Chad Jacobs, a Portland-based attorney providing special counsel to the city, said the amendment's language contains ambiguities that yield multiple interpretations.

For example, the measure



Alex Pajunas/The Daily Astorian

The Carruthers family donated a portion of Tansy Point to the city of Warrenton in the 1970s after the Port of Astoria threatened to condemn the property. A potential land swap with Warrenton Fiber prompted residents to approve a ballot measure in November that restricts city asset transfers.

refers to any "system, operation, or infrastructure for which the gross value of any income stream generated by that asset is \$100,000.00 or more," but it is unclear if the measure implies all or part of these assets. If the city wanted to get rid of a \$10,000 pipe in the Warrenton water system, and the full system generated \$100,000 or more in revenue, would the city have to ask voters first?

This may sound like an implausible reading of the measure, but the question is not unreasonable, according to Jacobs. If different readings

of the charter lead the city to incorrectly or inconsistently apply the provisions, lawsuits could ensue.

The city has a couple of options to clear up the confusion. It can adopt an ordinance defining terms that remain vague, or it can float another ballot measure to change problematic wording.

Yuill, who accused the city of spreading "false and misleading" information in its summary of the measure, said he understood the City Commission's need to make clarifications and minor revisions if necessary. But he urged them

not to quarrel with voters over the measure or its intent, which was to give the public a say in what becomes of public resources.

"The people — a great majority — voted for this," he said. "Now we gotta try to work together to work with it, not fight it, because they've already told you they want it."

Eye on the future

Gil Gramson, the former Warrenton city manager and mayor who promoted the measure, said he doesn't worry that the current City Commission would sell off a beloved entity, like Tansy Point, without listening to constituents first. He worries about future commissions who are not as responsive to public input.

Throughout Thursday's discussion, Tansy Point remained a recurring theme.

Although the commission ultimately took no action on the land swap with Warrenton Fiber, Yuill said the fact that the commission, in theory, could have approved the deal without allowing voters to weigh in, disturbed him and other residents.

"This group had the choice to sell it or not," Yuill said, "and that's what really bothered the people."



Lyra Fontaine/The Daily Astorian

Marty Schwab Harris criticized the "tax hike" on room rent as lacking public discussion.

Room tax: Code amendment to be drafted for February council meeting

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Requirements create confusion

Resident Marty Schwab Harris said it was troubling that a tax hike was being "unilaterally imposed" instead of going through a public hearing.

"Where are all the jobs in Cannon Beach going to come from if we look for every possible opportunity to apply more financial and more power burdens on our employers?" Schwab Harris asked.

The amendment, which uses the same language as state lodging tax rules, would take effect July 1, the start of the next fiscal year.

Mandatory fees

The city interprets "gross room rent" to include any fee that is mandatory, not refundable and paid in order to occupy the room, which is consistent with the state definition, City Attorney Tammy Herdener said. The city is not required by state law to collect room taxes on such fees.

Herdener said the state and many Oregon cities collect tax on nonoptional fees. "It was assumed that we did and it was pointed out in the audit that we don't," she said. "We're trying to rectify that situation."

Portland, Lincoln City, Bend and Eugene are among cities that apply the room tax to nonoptional fees, Finance Director Laurie Sawrey said.

In Cannon Beach, hotel guests pay an 8 percent city tax and 1.8 percent state tax to the hotel. The hotel forwards to the city 95 percent of the tax paid by the customer and keeps 5 percent of the amount, Sawrey said.

However, Cannon Beach's interpretation of room rent is different from other Clatsop County cities. Astoria and Seaside do not collect room taxes on nonoptional fees. Astoria lodging operators are taxed based on the total room rents they report to the city, said Sue Dohaniuk, the city's financial operations supervisor.

After a routine audit, Cannon Beach learned that seven out of 10 lodging operators had not paid tax on nonoptional fees. Lodging operators were informed in a September letter from the city that tax collection should include such fees. The city also asked hoteliers for their state lodging tax returns out of convenience so they would not need to fill out an additional form, Herdener said.

After receiving notice in September of the city's intentions, lodging industry members from 16 local businesses — including Hallmark Resort, Stephanie Inn, Ocean Lodge, Tolovana Inn and Surfsand Resort — asked the city in November to clarify the new requirements through a public process.

Sawrey said Tuesday that the letter was not meant to be punitive.

"It became clear to me that we weren't all on the same page," Sawrey said. "I thought, let's figure out what our definition is and let everyone know so we can all do the same thing and be consistent."

Representatives from local hotels and vacation rental companies responded that the city's interpretation conflicts with municipal code.

The city did not want lodging operators to pay for room taxes they did not collect from nonoptional fees. However, Beck-Sweeney said the letter from the city was not clear about when the requirements would take effect, and her business paid tax that they did not collect from guests. The amount was "substantial for a small company," she said. She has since documented the overpayment.

After criticism and confusion from lodging operators, city staff recommended the clarification. Councilors directed staff to draft a code amendment for the February council meeting.

Property: City will hold Jan. 19 forum on the effort

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economic development strategy. The city will hold a community forum on the effort Jan. 19 in The Loft at the Red Building.

Cronin said the city is using the former dealership as a case study for new development. Astoria Ford was the last major auto dealership to leave for Warrenton. Lum's Auto Center left in 2008, and Ocean Crest Chevrolet in

2004. Warrenton also hosts a Kia dealership.

Former dealerships and repair shops have often taken on new roles. The former Ocean Crest Chevrolet now hosts Fort George Brewery's Lovell Showroom, taproom and main brewery. The former Lum's Auto Center at the corner of Exchange and 16th streets sits next to the Performing Arts Center, which housing developers have eyed for a project.