

Cannon Beach chamber celebrates 'incredible year'

Direct impacts of tourism hit \$123 million

By KATHERINE LACAZE
For EO Media Group

CANNON BEACH — "Here comes the sun" was the message as the successes and impact of the Cannon Beach Chamber of Commerce were celebrated Thursday during the organization's annual membership awards ceremony.

"What an incredible year it has been," Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Court Carrier said at the event, held at the chamber's North Spruce Street home.

Enjoying a spread of hors d'oeuvres and libations, about 50 members took part in the event, an opportunity to recognize a number of businesses and individuals for a job well done.

Tourism growth

Carrier shared a report on the state of the tourism industry. Lodging tax collections have been "on a constant climb," he said.

While the summer quarter in 2016 was only about 8 percent higher than the same quarter of 2015, the 2016 fall, winter and spring quarters were up 17 percent, 25 percent and 23 percent, respectively.

"That is a huge growth in business," Carrier said. Speaking to the chamber members, he added, "You guys put that together. It's everyone in town that made that happen, and it made the success of what Cannon Beach is today. So thank



Katherine Lacaze/For The Daily Astorian

Buddie Asay Anderson, of the Cannon Beach History Center and Museum, accepts the award for Volunteer of the Year at the Cannon Beach Chamber of Commerce's annual Membership Awards Ceremony Thursday.

2017 WINNERS:

Member of the Year: Beachcomber Vacation Homes
Volunteer of the Year: Buddie Asay Anderson
Supporter of the Year: Coaster Construction
Excellence in Customer Service: Maggie & Henry

you all for the great job you have been doing. We have grown dramatically as a result of all of your efforts."

Last year, the tourism industry in Cannon Beach brought in more than \$3.8 million in total lodging taxes. The estimated direct economic impact of the industry was almost \$123 million. Using "a conservative multiplier," Carrier said, the estimated indirect impact was about \$368 million.

What's happening at the chamber?

Board member Kevin

Ridgway, the chairman of the marketing committee, shared an update on the chamber's goal to increase tourism, particularly during the winter, fall and spring.

"That's the need times in Cannon Beach when we want to fill more of our empty rooms, generate more hotel taxes so the city can do more work for us as residents," he said, adding, "that's the focus of what we're looking at."

The marketing committee's strategies for achieving that goal include expanding media awareness in the Portland and Seattle markets, making social

media channels more robust and expanding digital marketing, to name a few.

In addition to bringing visitors to town, the chamber also aims to highlight the best of what Cannon Beach has to offer. One way it does so is through the annual Sandcastle Contest.

Debbie Nelson, who heads a committee of more than a dozen members and staff, said it is important for her "to carry on this hometown tradition that is very near and dear to my heart."

On average, the contest brings about 30,000 visitors to Cannon Beach, requiring a large force of volunteers and sponsors.

"It's great for advertising, maybe not just for that weekend, but for all year long, because a lot of people connect Cannon Beach with the Sandcastle Contest," Nelson said. "I'm really glad we're still doing Sandcastle all of these 53 years later."

Nelson unveiled the poster for this year's competition and announced the date, June 17, although a parade will be held the day before and a 5K fun run and walk the day after.

Other important chamber events include the Stormy Weather Arts Festival in November and Haystack Holidays from mid-November through most of December.

Although January and February have been slow — "Mother Nature has not blessed us with the last two months," Carrier said — chamber staff is optimistic about the potential of 2017.

"I saw the sun today and it was marvelous, and I'm really excited," Carrier added.

Gearhart considers new RV limits after concerns

Parking, sleeping at issue for city

By R.J. MARX
The Daily Astorian

GEARHART — If you're a property owner and you have an RV in Gearhart, you can park on your property. But you can't live or camp in the RV. The city seeks to change that rule with a modification permitting RV owners to use their campers twice a year, for a period of no more than 96 hours each. Those without the permit would be subject to a fine.

"The ordinance as it stands, which allows people to stay in their RVs 96 hours at a time, twice a year, through a permit, is going to a hearing and a vote in April," City Administrator Chad Sweet said.

At Wednesday's City Council meeting, councilors presented an ordinance permitting residents to obtain the permit. According to the proposed ordinance, RVs cannot be parked in the public right of way and the permit may be revoked by the police chief or enforcement officer.

Homeowners may store RVs on their property permanently as long as they are not living in it. "This is just covering private property and being able to stay in the RV," Sweet said.

After approving consideration of the new ordinance, City Planner Carole Connell "will put her findings together as to the code," Sweet said. "This will go to the City Council to make its decision."

No RV camping

A separate ordinance limiting RV public areas is also before the council, driven by a suggestion by Gearhart Police Chief Jeff Bowman, who sought to make the "no sleeping" portion of the city's ordinance enforceable. This ordinance would be directed to those RV owners who "drive during the day, sightsee, find someplace and set up camp," Bowman said Thursday.

Bowman proposed language prohibiting RVs "parked or standing on blocks, leveling supports,



R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian
Police Chief Jeff Bowman explained the difficulty of enforcing Gearhart's RV rules during a November meeting. New ordinances will be presented in April.

pop-outs displayed or open," to enable enforcement.

Without it, he would have no way of knowing if someone was sleeping in the RV or not. "The main term here is 'sleep,'" he said. "There's no way we can have any type of proof or evidence that they're sleeping in it."

Bowman said any new ordinance prohibiting RV parking should not refer to "sleeping," but "storage."

According to Bowman in a letter to the council in November, a recent violation was rejected by a judge "who explained that appearance of use has no bearing. The violator can simply say he isn't sleeping or eating in the RV under current rules." He said he would like an ordinance specifying prohibitions on how it is stored. "I don't care if you roll up in your RV and it's legally parked for two days. A motor home is still a vehicle. But you can't have your pop-outs out on it, you can't have the tent trailer popped out, you can't be running portable generators, you can't have utilities hooked up to it. I'm going to steer it more toward a zoning thing than a law enforcement thing. Right now we can't enforce it."

The council change in the 96-hour ordinance will be presented to the public for discussion at the council's next meeting.

A related ordinance, prohibiting RVs from camping in spaces open to the public other than RV resorts, was tabled until April. A draft ordinance will be presented in April, Sweet said.

Drug plan could yield unintended consequences

By PARIS ACHEN
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Pharmaceutical representatives warned an experimental bill to curtail the rising cost of prescription drugs could have unintended consequences on the quality and availability of drugs in Oregon.

"I am concerned that it will stifle innovation," said Sandra Shotwell, CEO of DesignMedix, a drug developer that got its start at Portland State University.

The legislation by state

Rep. Rob Nosse, D-Portland, goes farther than any other law in the nation to regulate prescription prices.

The bill would cap patients' out-of-pocket copayment for prescriptions, require pharmaceutical companies to explain steep increases in the cost of a medication and mandate rebates when prices exceed a certain threshold.

Oregonians need relief from exorbitant drug prices, but addressing the problem is complicated, Nosse said.

"The way drugs are developed and the way they are paid

for makes solving this problem very hard," the Portland lawmaker said.

The story of one Oregon family, featured in the Portland Business Journal, stands out, Nosse said. When Les Rogers' 4-year-old daughter was diagnosed with a rare seizure disorder, the family learned the treatment, a drug called Acthar, cost \$35,000 per vial. The drug has been available since the 1950s, but when California-based Questcor Pharmaceuticals bought the rights to it, the company raised the price by 85,000 percent, from

\$45 a vial, Nosse noted.

Portland State research

DesignMedix has for the past nine years been building on research initiated at Portland State. The startup company has received state support from the Venture Development Fund and has contracted for clinical trials and capsules with Oregon companies, DesignMedix CEO Shotwell said.

"I'm looking at this (bill) and thinking, so we've had all this wind on our back, and now it's in our face," Shotwell said.

Conservation groups lobby to nix sale of Elliott State Forest

One vote would shift policy

By CLAIRE WITCOMBE
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Opponents of the planned sale of an 82,500-acre swath of the Elliott State Forest to a private partnership are lobbying members of the State Land Board to change their vote and keep the forest in public hands.

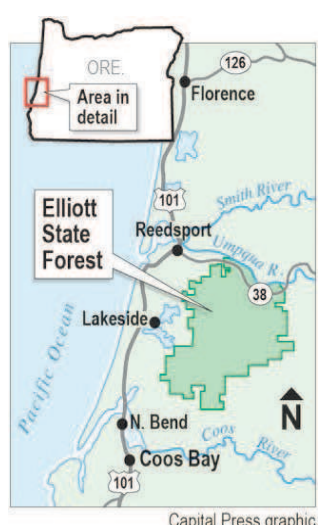
Meanwhile, officials at the Department of State Lands are both negotiating a sales agreement for the forest and, at the direction of the governor, researching a public ownership option.

Revenues from logging on the forest is meant to benefit the Common School Fund. But in recent years, the forest has operated at a loss.

In 2015, the land board agreed to a detailed protocol for finding a buyer and eventually selling the forest.

Only one entity — Lone Rock Resources, a Roseburg timber firm, and the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians — submitted a bid to buy the forest for its assessed value, \$220.8 million. Under the proposal, the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians would hold a conservation easement on the property.

Environmental groups are



Capital Press graphic



Pamplin Media Group
Conservation groups are lobbying state Treasurer Tobias Read to reverse his State Land Board vote to sell the Elliott State Forest to a private partnership.

lobbying the Legislature and members of the board — Gov. Kate Brown, Treasurer Tobias Read and Secretary of State Dennis Richardson — in earnest to change course and find a means of public ownership.

Brown, the only current member of the land board who was also on the board at the time of the initial vote to sell the forest, last month directed the Department of State Lands to come up with an alternative public ownership proposal.

Read, a Democrat, and Richardson, a Republican, voted in February to go forward with the sale.

The governor can't veto the decision if Read and Richardson decide to continue with the sale agreement at the board's next meeting in April, according to the Department of State Lands.

It's not clear exactly what

the public ownership proposal Brown has proposed will look like, although the governor has suggested using up to \$100 million in state bonding capacity to buy a portion of the forest and negotiating with the federal services to come up with a habitat conservation plan that permits "sustainable timber harvest."

Environmental groups say they have been lobbying Richardson and Read to change their votes.

Read has expressed concerns about diverging from the sale plan because of the state's fiduciary obligation to the

Common School Fund. Conservation groups believe there is a way to meet those obligations while protecting critical habitat and maintaining public access, although they remain largely mum about the details.

Lobby day

Environmental groups, including Cascadia Wildlands and Portland Audubon, held an official lobby day at the state capitol last week, meeting with Read and state legislators. They've encouraged their members to call legislators and the land board to push for the public ownership option.

The Elliott Forest, environmental groups say, has taken on even greater urgency in light of the Trump administration's stance on environmental policy.

Josh Laughlin, executive director of Cascadia Wildlands, said Wednesday that selling the Elliott to Lone Rock also presents a risk to the state's reputation as an outdoors mecca — and particularly, tourism officials' interest in drawing the Outdoor Retailer conference to Oregon.

Bob Sallinger, conservation director for Portland Audubon,

said he and two other people met with Read Thursday.

Sallinger, reluctant to provide details about potential proposals Thursday afternoon, said he felt the treasurer was "receptive" to the ideas presented.

"What I can say based on today is that I feel we're making headway," Sallinger said in a phone interview.

Read's office said the meeting Thursday was "productive."

Sallinger also said he felt that members of the Legislature his group met with were receptive to public ownership.

Courtney's support

State Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, has indicated his support for keeping the forest public, and sug-

gested in public testimony at last month's land board meeting that revenue bonds — which require repayment by an income-generating activity on the land such as logging — could be an option.

The board will convene again April 11. The Department of State Lands, for its part, also says it's not yet clear what will be discussed in terms of the public option.

"The DSL director will be providing an informational update at a minimum, consistent with the Governor's direction at the February meeting to look into public ownership options," spokeswoman Julie Curtis wrote in an email.

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