

Seaside parks district looks to possibly grow footprint

Older facilities, school move spurs talk

By R.J. MARX
The Daily Astorian

SEASIDE — Members of the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District Board of Directors could be evaluating the addition of a new building or buildings, Executive Director Skyler Archibald said.

"A lot of this is in the really early stages of developing," Archibald said of a facility plan. "We really need more indoor recreation space for our fitness participants, as well as youth programs. It may be feasible to acquire space in the area, and we've talked about the potential of middle school property, which would be available, or constructing a new building on our campus area."

The pool is roughly 40 years old; the youth center 20 years old, "maybe a little older," Archibald said.

In September, the district embarks on a \$120,000 project to resurface, polish and



R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian

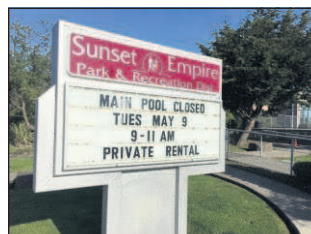
Aquatics is a major portion of the district's programs.

add underwater lighting to the main pool. "We're excited about it, but also realize the cost and the impact to our regular swimmers," Archibald said.

The project could keep the pool out of service for about six weeks, he said.

Formed in 1969, the SEPRD boundary follows Seaside School District #10 boundary, excluding Gearhart and Cannon Beach.

"We're basically a resource available to the entire county," board of directors chairman Michael Hinton said Monday.



R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian
Sign at the Sunset Empire pool in Seaside. The pool will be closed for renovations for six weeks this fall.

Expansion?

Hinton said the district is looking at the possibility of "some kind of expansion," either funded through a bond or system development charges — the fees paid by builders to the city for essential infrastructure. "That would give us a means of keeping abreast of urban growth and development," Hinton said. "It would help set aside money for capital improvements."

Among a wide variety of programs for all ages, the district offers aquatics, early education, a farmers market and events at the Bob Chisholm Community Center, including Meals on Wheels.

"We're considering some

renovation or development project that would allow us to build or redesign the youth center and basketball court adjacent to the pool to develop a gym or indoor track," Hinton said.

The board is also keeping an eye on the Seaside School District expansion and possible utilization of former school buildings. "That's a valuable property," Hinton said.

"The school district will probably need to take every advantage of a potential sale and gain from that to manage expenses," he said.

Pool programs are drawing visitors from Astoria as a result of their lower cost and facilities. "A lot of them like our city parks, too," Hinton said, including an Americans with Disabilities Act accessible boat lot on the Wahanna River on the east side of Broadway Park. "Our programs seem to be thriving."

Budget

Archibald and Finance Manager Jennifer Stephens presented a preliminary budget at the district's April board meeting.

"We're still going through

the details," Hinton said. "We have a major overhaul of our swimming pool. We're going to shut it down and replace the plaster around the pool."

This shutdown will extend from September to November.

The budget is divided in six departments, with the largest being aquatics, including three bodies of water, the main pool, the learner pool and the spa.

District revenues derive from property taxes, grants, timber tax and an ending fund balance, Archibald said.

"We've been fortunate to get some sizable grants, some really sizable in the past," Archibald said. "Today we have some really valuable smaller ones. "They help us kick-start some of the projects we've been working on but didn't have the funds for."

As for future building plans, discussion will begin "depending on how our community feels," Archibald said.

"This is going to need to be a community-driven project. We hope to engage our community and then get the help of some experts to see what's possible, what's feasible and what would be the best solution moving forward."

Tunnel collapse renews safety concerns about nuclear site

By NICHOLAS K. GERANIOS and MANUEL VALDES
Associated Press

RICHLAND, Wash. — The collapse of an underground tunnel containing radioactive waste that forced workers at the Hanford Nuclear Reservation to shelter in place is the latest incident to raise safety concerns at the sprawling site that made plutonium for nuclear bombs for decades after World War II.

Officials detected no release of radiation Tuesday and no workers were injured, said Randy Bradbury, a spokesman for the Washington state Department of Ecology.

No workers were inside the tunnel when it collapsed, causing soil on the surface above to sink 2 to 4 feet over a 400 square foot area, officials said.

The tunnels are hundreds of feet long, with about 8 feet of soil covering them, the U.S. Department of Energy said.

The anti-nuclear group Beyond Nuclear said the incident helped show "radioactive waste management is out of control."

Democratic U.S. Sen. Maria Cantwell of Washington said worker safety must be the priority.

"My thoughts are with the first responders who are working to assess the situation on the ground," she said.

Worker safety has long been a concern at Hanford, which is located about 200 miles south-east of Seattle.

Washington Attorney General Bob Ferguson filed a lawsuit last fall against the Energy Department and its contractor, Washington River Protection Solutions, contending vapors released from underground nuclear waste tanks posed a serious risk to workers.

Ferguson said that since the early 1980s, hundreds of workers have been exposed to vapors escaping from the tanks and that those breathing the vapors developed nosebleeds, chest and lung pain, headaches, coughing, sore throats, irritated eyes and difficulty breathing.

Lawyers for the Energy Department have said no evidence has been provided showing workers have been harmed by vapors.

The cause of the collapse was not immediately known. It was discovered Tuesday as part of a routine inspection and occurred during a massive cleanup that has been underway since the 1980s and costs more than \$2 billion a year. The work is expected to take until 2060 and cost more than \$100 billion.

Hanford officials said they were studying the area of the collapse to determine how to create a barrier between the contaminated equipment in the tunnel and the outside air.

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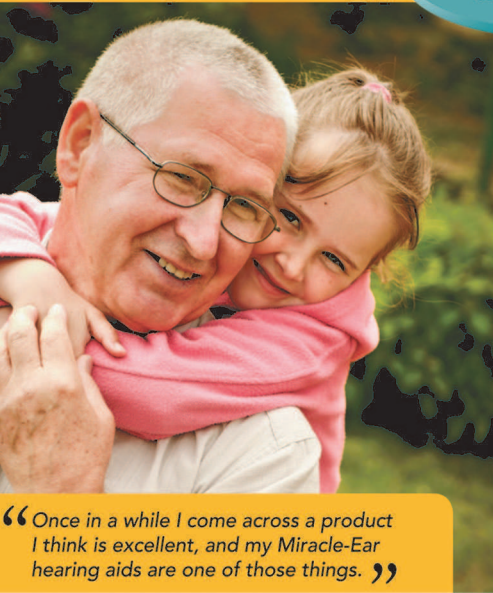
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