

# Cannon Beach approves excise tax for housing

## Tax on permits would finance affordable units

By **BRENNA VISSER**  
*The Daily Astorian*

CANNON BEACH — City councilors approved an excise tax Tuesday designed to fund affordable housing projects.

In a 4-1 vote, councilors approved a 1 percent tax that would be applied to building permits — so if someone applied for a permit to build \$200,000 home, \$2,000 would go into the fund.

If the surcharge was applied to commercial and residential permits in 2016, the tax would have yielded about \$96,000, City Planner Mark Barnes said. Councilors who voted for

the tax supported any way for the city to raise money for affordable housing projects, as well as the builder incentives that would waive the tax if the proposed units were affordable.

What projects are chosen and assessed to be affordable — which means households intended for people with incomes 80 percent of the median county income — would be decided by the City Council.

But Councilor George Vetter, the one dissenting vote, took issue with the principle of taxing a small group of people to solve what he calls “a community problem” in Cannon Beach.

“I would much prefer to see this issue solved with a general obligation bond,” Vetter said. “In a citizen survey, the people identified this as a com-

munity problem. I’d like to see the solution come from their pocketbooks.”

Vetter also said that he doesn’t think the waiver will be enough to entice developers.

“We’re talking about market value,” he said. “To get the best return, we would need to make up with some kind of subsidy.”

Other cities like Salem and Portland have passed similar taxes, while Astoria is still considering the option.

Affordable Housing Fund The city’s budget committee approved next fiscal year’s budget, but not without heated debate over the merits of the newly-added Affordable Housing Fund.

The budget was approved 9-1, with the ‘no’ vote coming Vetter.

Because of the increase in

the lodging tax from 7 to 8 percent in 2016, the budget grew 4.7 percent, City Manager Brant Kucera said. The budget includes four major water and wastewater improvement projects, a newly funded position for an in-house building official to evaluate building codes and procedure and additional funding for updated radio technology for police.

But one of the most significant changes to the budget landscape is the Affordable Housing Fund. The fund’s purpose in this budget cycle is to build five affordable homes in the RV Resort on Elk Land Road and Haskell Lane, and \$92,000 of that fund is made up from excise tax revenue.

The park was identified as a potential site in a report compiled by the affordable housing task force last year,

citing the fact the city owned the land, as well as relatively low startup costs as benefits.

Each house would be around 400 square feet and mobile, Kucera said. With rent anticipated to be \$600 to \$800 a month, the homes would be intended for single and working-class people who earn about \$15 an hour.

Different approaches

While the \$429,740 fund has remained in the budget, some members of the committee took issue with the homes relying on a bank loan, rents and construction excise taxes tied to a building economy — all sources of income the committee interpreted as either too risky or unfair to business.

“I don’t think it’s good for us to charge such a tiny group of people for something

that won’t make that much money,” Vetter said in reference to excise taxes.

During a May budget meeting, Kucera argued that taking out loans to buy a home is standard procedure, and that the plan is low risk given that the city already owns the land and could sell the units if the program does not succeed.

“Maybe there is some assumption of cost,” budget committee member Carolyn Propst said, “but if you don’t start with a low-risk project then how do you get started?”

But with Kucera leaving as city manager at the end of the month, how this project will roll out isn’t set in stone. Tentatively, implementation will be pushed from summer until fall, Kucera said, where it will be under the direction of a new city manager.

# Police chief will serve as the interim CB city manager

## Cannon Beach recruiting to replace Kucera

By **BRENNA VISSER**  
*The Daily Astorian*

CANNON BEACH — Police Chief Jason Schermerhorn will serve as interim city manager starting in July.

After 2 1/2 years in Cannon Beach, City Manager Brant Kucera is leaving at the end of the month to become the city manager of Sisters, citing the need for “a change of pace.”

Schermerhorn was suggested as a candidate because he had served as an interim city manager briefly between former city manager Rich Mays’ retirement and interim city manager Jennie Messer in 2014, Kucera said, and is familiar with the duties.

“He is well-liked and well-known throughout the community,” Kucera said.

The City Council voted unanimously for Schermerhorn. Selecting the police chief also means the city does not have to spend time or resources finding, hiring and training an interim pick from outside City Hall.

Schermerhorn has been the police chief of Cannon Beach since 2012, and before then was a sergeant for Seaside Police from 2005 to 2012. He received a bachelor’s degree in criminal justice from Western Oregon University.

He will be receiving Kucera’s salary during the interim.

The City Council will be presented with quotes from recruitment firms at a work session next week.

Whichever firm is chosen will have four months to begin a national search to fill the position by November, according to the city charter.

The interim city manager serves mostly as a point of contact to make sure predetermined projects and busi-

ness keep moving efficiently, Kucera said.

While summer is generally the busiest time for law enforcement in Cannon Beach, Schermerhorn said he was not concerned with an overwhelming workload. With how the hierarchy of the department works, Lt. Chris Wilbur is already accustomed to taking on chief duties when he is away, he said.

Before departing in June, Kucera plans to sit down with department heads to solidify projects, as well as finish lease negotiations between the city and the Cannon Beach Academy concerning its new location at the former Children’s Center on Hemlock.

Kucera advised whoever takes on the role next to be very physically present in the community.

“This community expects the city manager to be visible and out there in the community — more than I have been,” Kucera said. “The next manager needs to recognize being active in the community is the key to their success.”



Jason Schermerhorn

# Man accused in Portland stabbings targets victim in court outburst

By **STEVEN DUBOIS**  
*Associated Press*

PORTLAND — The man accused of killing two men and wounding a third who tried to stop his anti-Muslim tirade against two teenagers on a Portland light-rail train shouted he was “not guilty” today during a courtroom outburst directed at one of the victims.

Jeremy Christian, 35, didn’t enter a plea during his brief court appearance but said he was “not guilty of anything but defending myself against the violent aggression by Micah Fletcher!”

Fletcher was in the courtroom but said nothing to reporters and displayed no reaction as he left. The 21-year-old was stabbed in the neck during the May 26 attack that killed Ricky Best and Taliesin Namkai-Meche.

Christian was arraigned

on a 15-count indictment charging him with aggravated murder, attempted murder and other crimes. The hearing lasted about two minutes, and his next court appearance is July 18.

Prosecutors who have reviewed videos and interviews with witnesses say in

court papers that Christian yelled hateful comments at two black girls, one of whom was wearing an Islamic head covering called a hijab.

When the girls moved away from Christian, he made a sudden move toward Namkai-Meche and got into a confrontation.

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**Additional thanks to:** North Coast Subway, Reed & Hertig, John Kawasoe, Knusten Insurance, Clatsop Community Bank and to all our ALCP volunteer members.

Finally, a special thank you to everyone who supported our organization by purchasing tickets and participating in our events. We dressed 690 school kids in need this school year.

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