



Photos by Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

The expansive gym at the Cannon Beach Elementary School sits unused.

School: 'This is something achievable if people are behind it'

Continued from Page 1A

Worries about cost

It would cost \$450,000 to purchase the property, according to 2016 estimates. The cost of interior and exterior renovations would be about \$371,000, according to Coaster Construction. While most of the classrooms in the 1950s-era building would be unusable, an engineering report concluded the gym was in good condition.

Due to age and the years of sitting dormant, Steidel said there are worries about unexpected costs and the upkeep it would take to run it.

"What's scaring people is the maintenance and the remodeling. You don't know what you are going to find," Steidel said.

With a \$99.7 million bond project in full swing to relocate four school buildings out of the tsunami zone, Seaside School District Superintendent Sheila Roley said the district has no interest in acting as a landlord for old school sites.

"We're happy to talk to the city (of Cannon Beach) about any interest in the school," Roley said. "We haven't had any recent conversations, but we would love to have that building as a Cannon Beach community facility."

Roley said all school sites will be appraised again this spring.

Interested parties

Since the school's closure, many groups have come forward with ideas on how to preserve the property. More than 50 members of the Cannon Beach Chorus wrote to the City Council to advocate for the building to become a community center and concert hall. The Hay-



Signs that students once occupied classrooms remain four years after the Cannon Beach Elementary School shut down.

stack Rock Awareness Program has expressed interest in using it as a possible art and ecology center. Many residents say they want a place big enough for the community to gather.

Some of the urgency for the city to buy the property comes from groups like the Greater Ecola Natural Area and Ecola Watershed Council, which say the city buying the school is the best way to ensure an ecologically and culturally sensitive area is protected. Adjacent to the building is NeCus Park, named after the Native American village that once stood there.

"A part of the vision for NeCus has always been to acquire the remainder of the site in order to create a gateway to Cannon Beach that celebrates the natural beauty and cultural history of this extraordinary place," said Katie Voelke, chairwoman of the Greater

Ecola Natural Area. "Cannon Beach and its real estate is some of the most sought after in the state. This property will likely sell to a private party, possibly shutting the community out from a cherished location."

The school district has also had conversations about the property with members of the Clatsop-Nehalem Confederated Tribes in the last week, Roley said. Officials from the tribe were unable to be reached for comment.

While there are many competing visions for the space, Steidel said it is a testament to the building's versatility.

"I think all this interest shows the enormity of what it could be used for. What's better than having a building that's constantly used?" Steidel said.

Moving forward

With community support again on the rise, the city will

continue to discuss funding options at an upcoming work session, as well as how it could be balanced with other capital projects. Some new ideas are already being explored, like researching whether some of the dollars allocated to the Tourism and Arts Commission could be reserved for running a community center. Other options, like floating a bond or fundraising, will be discussed, Steidel said.

While all five city councilors listed purchasing the school as a priority at a recent goal-setting retreat, Steidel was the only one to list it as No. 1.

"Obviously, all of these projects will compete for dollars. But I don't think they should compete," he said. "It's doable right now. South Wind takes a lot of long-term planning. This is something achievable if people are behind it."

Homeless: 'The need is such an enormous one'

Continued from Page 1A

work. "The goal is to get kids connected with their dental home care," Abbott said.

Crystal Moody and Shawna Neumeister of The Harbor link victims of domestic violence to community resources, including legal and medical advocacy. While The Harbor does not offer a shelter in Clatsop County, they will provide confidential locations for emergency purposes, Neumeister said. "Hopefully our shelter will open this year," she said. "In the meantime, sister agencies help to get them out of town."

Marlin Martin, regional director of the Clatsop Community Action Regional Food Bank, offered visitors healthy snacks and food resource guides listing locations and times of emergency food outlets throughout the county. "Regardless of what community they reside in, they will have resources in an emergency to find food," Martin said.

Grace Smith and Angie Wildt of Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District provided meal and program schedules at the Bob Chisholm Center, and free fitness classes,



LEFT: Clatsop County Public Health Director Michael McNickle with Sarah Mitchell at Tuesday's Project Homeless Connect event. RIGHT: Alan Evans of Helping Hands Re-entry Outreach Center offers free kits with toiletries and personal supplies.

low-cost showers and pool passes.

Shirley Yates of Laundry Love participated as a volunteer at Homeless Connect for the first time.

Laundry Love, a national organization, came to Seaside five years ago with the aim of providing free laundry loads for families.

The program, held monthly at the Laundromat on South Roosevelt Drive, has grown "like crazy" over the last year,

Yates said.

She hoped to raise awareness of the program and to make sure all people know about their services.

"The need is such an enormous one," Yates said. "Hav-

ing clean clothes is important for how you feel about yourself — we don't realize it if we have a washer and dryer at our fingertips. For these people, it's a health hazard not to have clean clothes."

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Q: Does all fish taste better fresh off the boat?

A: No. Sturgeon is an exception to the "fresher the better" rule. It is preferable to wait and eat sturgeon at least two days after it is caught. When Sturgeon die they go into rigor and the fibers in the fillets tense up. It takes 48 hours for the fibers to loosen so that the fillet has the proper texture and flavor when cooked. We sell Sturgeon that has been caught in the same day, but always recommend waiting to preparing it.