

Cannon Beach Planning Commission cool to workforce housing amendments

Recommends council reject the changes

By R.J. MARX
The Daily Astorian

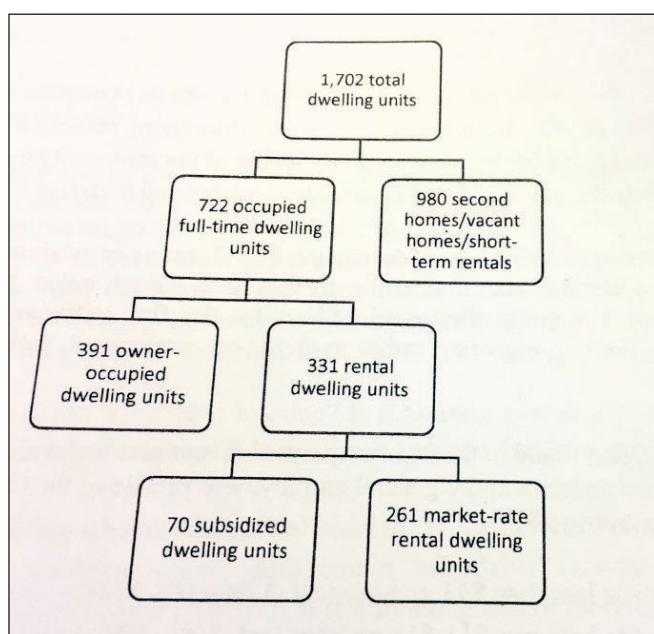
CANNON BEACH — Members of the Cannon Beach Planning Commission recognize the city needs workforce housing. But zoning amendments brought before them Thursday night are not the way to do it, they decided.

The commission recommended the City Council reject the changes intended to reduce barriers for private developers seeking to build affordable housing.

The amendments were intended to meet housing needs by reducing construction costs and subsequently reducing rental costs to tenants, wrote Martin North Vice President of Operations Dave Norstedt in January.

Mike Clark, owner of Coaster Properties, with former city planner Rainmar Bartl, proposed to amend parts of the code.

Amendments focused on reducing parking require-



Cannon Beach
Housing stock in Cannon Beach as presented by the Cannon Beach Affordable Housing Task Force.

ments to maximize the number of units on a property and increasing height restrictions in the R3 zone, which is designated for multifamily housing.

By raising the roof-line limit from 28 feet to 32 feet, developers could build three stories to include more units, intended to drive down rents for tenants.

Reduced landscaping area requirements and changes to condominium conversion rules for multifamily dwellings were also among proposals.

"To me there's nothing in this that would assure this would be affordable housing," Commissioner Lisa Kerr said. "The proponents are all people involved in development and

commercial endeavors. That's fine — but the way it's written here is a disaster waiting to happen. I don't think how any of this could lead to affordable housing."

Commissioner Darryl Johnson objected to proposed roof-height changes. "Moving the height to 32 feet reminds me of going to Seaside," he said. "We have a different feel in the city."

Parking changes could make spaces harder to find, he added. "Lowering the parking in the units downtown where there's already a premium for parking, lowering those standards doesn't make any sense."

Commission Chairman Bob Lundy said statutes should stand as written, with variances to create workforce housing considered on a case-by-case basis.

The commissioners recommended rejection of all amendments by a 7-0 vote.

"We're looking for another alternative to this," Kerr said after the meeting. "It's not just a blanket 'no way.' I just don't see any outside controls on this. Outside developers coming in and charging \$1,600 for an apartment — that's not affordable housing anymore."

Interior boss alters overhaul after pushback

By MATTHEW BROWN and DAN ELLIOTT
Associated Press

BILLINGS, Mont. — U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke is revamping a planned sweeping overhaul of his department with a new organizational map that more closely follows state lines instead of the natural boundaries he initially proposed, he told The Associated Press in an exclusive interview.

The changes follow complaints from a bipartisan group of Western state governors that Zinke did not consult them before unveiling his original plan last month. The agency oversees vast public lands, primarily in the U.S. West, ranging from protected national parks and wildlife refuges to areas where coal mining and energy exploration dominate the landscape.

Zinke told AP that his goal remains unchanged: decentralizing the Interior Department's bureaucracy and creating 13 regional headquarters.

"At present we are mismanaging and squandering our assets through a layered bureaucracy that reflects a very old department that really has not reorganized since the turn of the last century," he said. "We will be moving assets to the front lines and moving authority to make decisions and, I would argue, better decisions to the front lines."

The redrawn map shows that states such as Colorado, New Mexico and Wyoming would fall within a single region instead of being split among multiple regions. Other states remain divided, including California, Nevada, Montana and Oregon.

Aspects of the original map — which was first made public by AP — remain, with some regions labeled according to river systems, such as the Upper Colorado Basin and the Missouri Basin. But the new lines tend to cut across geographic features and follow state lines, not boundaries of rivers and ecosystems.

The new proposal resulted from discussions with governors, members of Congress and senior leaders at the agency, Interior Department officials said. Zinke spokeswoman Heather Swift said the original proposal had been a "discussion draft" rather than a finished document and was now being refined through a collaborative process.

Zinke, a former Republican congressman from Montana, already has imposed major changes at the 70,000-employee Interior Department. He has rolled back regulations considered burdensome to the oil and gas industry and reassigned dozens of senior officials who were holdovers from President Barack Obama's administration.

The vision of retooling the department's bureaucracy plays into longstanding calls from politicians in the West to shift more decisions about nearly 700,000 square miles of public lands under Interior oversight to officials in the region.

Some Democrats have speculated that Zinke's true motivation for the overhaul is to gut the department, noting that more than 90 percent of its

employees already work outside Washington, D.C.

Zinke contends that he's trying to streamline the Interior Department's management of public lands by requiring all of the agencies within the department to use common regional boundaries, including the Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service and Fish and Wildlife Service.

Congress has the final word on the proposal.

Tainted wells on North Coast

Associated Press

SALEM — A survey of groundwater wells by the state Department of Environmental Quality along the North Coast has found nearly 40 contaminants in residential and irrigation wells, a newspaper reported.

Contaminants identified in Clatsop and Tillamook counties include nitrates, pesticides, metals and bacteria. The Statesman Journal reported. Many were within federal guidelines but some were not, including two wells that tested above the limit for arsenic.

The survey of 69 residential and irrigation wells included wells serving a fish hatchery and a public soccer field in the two counties and is part of an effort to compile groundwater aquifer data statewide that was authorized by state lawmakers in 2013.

Ten different pesticide-related chemicals were detected. All were at levels below health standards. But the state noted that little research has been done on the effect of multiple chemicals on human health.

The results were expected, said Paige Evans, who coordinates the groundwater project for the Department of Environmental Quality

"I would say nothing in this report is alarming," she said. "The North Coast has shallow, sandy ... geology that make the aquifers vulnerable. It's a very distinct area of the state."

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Brown wants to hire 185 more child welfare workers

By CLAIRE WITHYCOMBE
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Gov. Kate Brown says she wants to hire 185 more child welfare workers at the state Department of Human Services, to the tune of \$14.5 million.

That's in addition to 184 budgeted field positions that remain unfilled.

The governor announced her plan three weeks after state auditors found the state's child welfare program was chronically understaffed, among other persistent problems.

On any given day, about 7,600 kids are in Oregon's foster care system.

The secretary of state's audit found that case-loads are three to four times "higher than what is optimal, contributing to staff burnout, increased turnover and difficulty recruiting new workers."

Due in part to high turnover, the state's caseworkers are also fairly inexperienced. About one-third of caseworkers have started within the past 18 months, according to the audit.

Brown wants to hire 75 social workers, 75 case workers, 25 office support staff and 10 managers. The move would require legislative approval.

"I urge our elected representatives to take advantage of this session to make sure that more Oregonian children have access to a brighter future," Brown said in a statement Thursday.

The boost would go part of the way to what auditors say is a dire shortage of workers. In order to adequately meet the needs of the thousands of kids in its care, the state would need to hire about 769 more field staff, auditors said.

Although the Department of Human Services already has the money to hire 184 field positions — that's the difference between the number of field positions the department has budgeted for in the biennium and the actual staffing average as reported by state auditors — the governor's plan would call for 185 separate positions, according to the department.

It's not yet clear what exactly the agency will do differently to onboard employees expediently, though.

A spokeswoman for the governor said that Brown has been working with Department of Human Services Director Fariborz Pakseresh and Child Welfare Director Marilyn Jones "to understand which changes would bring the most tangible impact most quickly."