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SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

Seaside shifts to 'caution' on school project

A warning sign on budget, schedule

In a region where generations have venerated the spawning salmon of Coho and China creeks as they traveled to the Neawanna River, salmon protection looms large in the \$100 million Seaside campus building project — the cost of which has ballooned to more than \$123 million.

Caution flags are flying for both the schedule and budget of the new middle and high school campus in the school district's project summary.

Scheduling changes for fall and winter work, size reductions in the campus and tough decisions on building materials have already been logged in the project, approved by voters in 2016.

Regulatory delays, along with unforeseen impacts like weather and the economy, could shape a project that aims to have all district students in their seats at the new campus by September 2020.


R.J. MARX

Army Corps

A June timeline anticipated permit approvals by July 18 from the Department of State Lands and Army Corps of Engineers. The school district had proposed a combination of stream enhancement, wetland and swale creation to meet regulatory concerns about on-site waterways.

The Department of State Lands signed off on the permit application July 26.

The Army Corps has yet to do so.

"The initial mitigation plan submitted by Seaside School District didn't adequately offset the impacts to wetlands and streams that their proposed construction would incur," said Corps spokesman Jeffrey Henon earlier this month. "We are waiting for them to submit a revised mitigation plan that meets those impacts."

In response, Seaside School District Superintendent Sheila Roley said, "We have been working with quality people who just kind of pushed (up) their sleeves and said, 'OK, let's figure it out another way.'"

While Corps approval delay is not unusual, Project Manager Jim Henry said its timing could have the greatest impact.

In its latest submission, delivered in mid-August, the district pivoted to "compensatory mitigation" — offering environmental actions at other locations


View from the new campus site in early July.
R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian

to offset impacts to the original site.

School district consultant Jack Dalton designed a trade-off designating more wetland mitigation at school property along U.S. Highway 101, Henry said.

The revised application calls for a perimeter on district-owned land behind the bus barn along Neawanna Creek, into which China Creek and Coho Creek both flow.

"We're in the same watershed," Henry said. "Now everything seems to be running on the right path."

Budget caution

In November 2016, district voters approved a bond of \$99.7 million to build a new campus to replace schools located in the tsunami zone. That price tag originally included professional services and district expenses.

According to the July 2018 progress report, the total project cost stands at more than \$123 million.

Expenses for construction alone total almost \$100 million. Professional

services and district expenses comprise the remainder.

Construction for the middle and high school building has been adjusted from \$43 million in 2016 to almost \$59 million today.

The per-student cost, estimated at \$82,034 in 2016, is now above \$96,000.

Despite the increases, the budget is "on track," Henry said.

Part of that comes from project cutbacks.

Earlier this year, architects reduced the building footprint by about 15 percent, trimming square footage and adding a third floor to the middle- and high-school building to reduce foundation costs.

Additional "efficiencies" announced this month come in plumbing fixtures, roof drains, floor tile and construction materials — about 40 items at \$30,000 or \$40,000 each, Henry said.

To match expenses, the district lists revenues of \$110 million in bond sales, with \$5.4 million in state matching bonds

and interest.

Property assets — disposition of the current high school building, Broadway Middle School, Cannon Beach Elementary and Gearhart Elementary School — are anticipated to total \$7 million — a "conservative estimate," Henry said.

Work on the Seaside Heights Elementary School renovation and addition is scheduled for mid-September. Site-clearing, erosion-control, excavation and foundation work will continue throughout the winter. The access road from the Heights to the new campus site is tentatively rescheduled for 2019.

Hoffman Construction is working six days a week to get as much done as possible before the rainy season.

"The volume of work taking place in Oregon has everyone associated with construction stretched beyond capacity," Henry said.

R.J. Marx is The Daily Astorian's South County reporter and editor of the Seaside Signal and Cannon Beach Gazette.

LETTERS

Don't dismantle rock sculptures by river

I wish to write my support for the beautiful rock sculptures that appear along the Astoria Riverwalk. The artist has taken ordinary objects (rocks) and made them into innovative pieces of art.

The Daily Astorian recently published a letter by a writer who admitted vandalizing these difficult to duplicate art pieces ("Please ban stacking boulders on Riverwalk," July 19).

We need to support our local artists, and not vandalize their works. The writer used the excuse that these sculptures were dangerous. Perhaps he failed to realize that he was mere feet away from the Columbia River during his acts of vandalism. And that the river is far more dangerous than any sculpture along the river banks.

DAN NEGLEY
 Astoria

No evidence of Trump collusion with Russians

You know the country is "going to hell in a handbasket." There's a difference between Donald Trump talking to some Russians (and that's all you have, because there isn't any evidence for anything else), and Hillary Clinton making a deal with them that allows certain parties in that nation to control the majority of this nation's uranium.

CARL YATES
 Seaside

A bridge solution made simple

"A really good guy" is how our president has described Paul Manafort, even though he hid millions from us in the U.S., and by doing this he has, I would assume, not paid the taxes associated with this income.

Could we ask the judge in this case to have a forensic accountant total up how much we are owed in lost tax payments? And, because Manafort is a really good guy, he might autho-



rize those funds to be spent on the bridge repairs we need from sixth to 11th streets along the Astoria Riverwalk. That might just make a really sad thing that has happened to him, as the president has described, into proof to the American people that he is a really good guy.

Not knowing how much money he would have paid in taxes if his funds were not hidden in offshore accounts like the rest of us do business, maybe there would be some left over — after completion of the bridge work — for the ostrich farm, so we can all have coats, too. I'd like a side of boots with my coat, also ... size 13, please.

PAT WILSON
 Astoria

Buehler is not a moderate

The narrative — carefully constructed, and funded by billionaire conservative donors — is that Knute Buehler is a moderate. It's a good story. But it's not the truth. Instead, at nearly every opportunity in his public life, Buehler has shown himself to be a reliable

voice and vote for the conservative right.

While serving in the state Legislature, Buehler voted against protecting Roe v. Wade, voted against expanding access to health care for hundreds of thousands of Oregonians, and voted to deny Dreamers — people who have been living in this state almost all of their lives — access to much-needed financial aid at Oregon's public universities.

Already in this campaign, Buehler has voiced his support for a virulently anti-immigrant measure that would strip Oregon of its more than three decades-old sanctuary state status, while praising Donald Trump's pardons of the Hammond brothers.

He also opposed Measure 101 last year, which, had it been defeated, would cost hundreds of thousands of Oregonians their health insurance. These aren't moderate positions; they're conservative ones. Voters in Oregon should reject Buehler, just like they did Donald Trump.

BEBE MICHEL
 Gearhart

Why should we believe President Trump?

As of this writing, President Donald Trump has made 4,229 false or misleading statements in the first 558 days of his presidency. Talk about fake news. You can see for yourself at wapo.st/2BdNxEC

Yet, Mr. Trump says repeatedly, "Believe me." Why? Why should we believe anyone so divorced from the truth?

Meanwhile, our nation is under daily cyberattack from Russia. They successfully attacked our last election, and they are attacking our next election as this is written. Mr. Trump met in secret for two hours with the Russian president recently in Helsinki. What do we know about that meeting? According to Mr. Trump at his pep rally, "Everything is fine. Putin likes me."

Why, as a nation, do we find any of this acceptable?

ERIC HALPERIN
 Gearhart