

Housing: 'Based on the present housing prices, there's no housing'

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This year, Bornstein Seafoods bought an apartment complex to house workers. Pelican Brewing, with a pub in Cannon Beach, provides seven apartment units on site for employees, as well as a house in Manzanita.

Pacific Seafood opened a new 78,000-square-foot plant in Warrenton this summer on the Skipanon River, returning after a fire destroyed a previous plant on the site five years before. The new plant is expected to employ as many as 140 full-time and 100 seasonal workers.

But the West Coast seafood processor has struggled over the past three to five years to find housing for seasonal workers across its many locations, representatives told the Planning Commission Thursday.

News outlets in Newport reported this summer that the company was looking at building housing for employees along U.S. Highway 101.

"It's gotten to the extent that we put people up in hotels and motels," said Michael Miliucci, manager of special projects and a lawyer for Pacific Seafood.

But hotel rooms are difficult to come by on the coast, particularly during tourism-heavy months. They looked into purchasing apartment buildings, but did not want to have to evict people living in the units to make room for employees.

"That's just not the way Pacific operates," Miliucci told planning commissioners.

The company looked at options in Astoria, but encountered long waiting lists even on apartment complexes still under construction.

"Based on the present housing prices, there's no housing," Miliucci said. Warrenton planning staff recommended approval of the code amendment, which would allow the development of the dormitory-style housing as an outright use.

Kevin Cronin, the city's community development director, doesn't know of any other coastal community contemplating this particular kind of solution to address the lack of worker housing. "We're doing some groundbreaking work," he told the Planning Commission. In the process, the city may learn things it didn't anticipate, he acknowledged.

Paul Mitchell, the chairman of the Planning Commission, agreed with Cronin that Warrenton could have a hand in pioneering ways for companies to provide worker housing.

"We're seeing this more and more in this community," he said. "It's unfortunate that we don't have the kind of housing that we need."

There are no details yet about how the interior of Pacific Seafood's warehouse dormitory will be configured to accommodate workers, nor how many employees it could house. The company still needs to work with the city's building department to nail down those specifics and figure out the logistics of turning a warehouse into housing.

Bunnies: 'I think the winter will do a lot of the work for us'

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The humane society accepts rabbits, but only if they are surrendered by owners. The organization doesn't accept strays — which is what the Tolovana bunnies would be considered — and the group already has a monthslong waiting list, humane society public information manager Laura Klink said.

Rabbit rescues like Rabbit Advocates in the Portland area have been inundated for years, said Mary Huey, the group's founder. A few shelters, like Multnomah County Animal Services, can accept a large quantity of stray animals. But at most, the demand of people trying to offload unwanted bunnies consistently outpaces the number of homes willing to take them.

"The community is going to have to get together and realize it's going to either stay the same or going to get worse if they don't do anything ... And as a community step up and find homes for these rabbits," Huey said.

The situation leaves the city with few options.

"The options are to kill them or to trap them ... And then kill them," St. Denis said.

The City Council did not appear fond of either choice.

"I would love to see how the (Chamber of Commerce) would deal with the image of Cannon Beach: Bunny killing capital of the world," City Councilor Mike Benefield said.

City councilors did discuss some local measures, like encouraging homeowners to do their own trapping and

requiring residents to keep bunnies in hatches like they do chickens if they want to keep them around.

Mayor Sam Steidel suggested looking into a ban on feeding wildlife, since many neighbors believe the problem is escalating because of some residents and tourists intentionally feeding the bunnies.

But City Councilor George Vetter argued that even without the extra treats, there is enough natural foliage to support a robust bunny population.

"There is plenty of grass for them to eat, so I don't think having any control over people feeding them will affect the numbers," he said.

For now, the city will continue researching and is open to ideas from the public.

If nothing else, St. Denis thinks Mother Nature will help at least until next spring.

"I think the winter will do a lot of the work for us," he said.

Cemetery: 'We have a lot of unmarked graves'

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association plans to install a columbarium with 1-by-1-foot niches for holding cremated remains in urns.

"In talking with some of the mortuaries, there's a high demand for those," Burke said. "People like the idea of being buried in a niche as opposed to in the ground."

The cemetery has so far sold more than 1,400 burial sites, but has only recorded 881 burials, Burke said. Some of the sites are reserved by family members who buy plots in advance. Some were unmarked or used wooden headstones that eroded over time in the moist environment.

The association is still in the process of identifying unmarked graves through visual surveys, probing the ground and dowsing.

Patti Van Osdol, the association's vice president and former owner of Granny Patti's Trading Post farm and feed store in Svensen, has been digging through marriage records, death certificates, diaries, newspaper articles and other historical records, whittling down the number of unmarked graves



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Steve Burke examines a headstone.

at the cemetery to less than 200.

"We have a lot of unmarked graves, and I have a lot of known community burials," she said. "It's putting the cemetery together."

The association plans to

finish the parking lot and a concrete slab for the flagpole and veteran's memorial this year. Next year, it will construct a kit pavilion, add disabled-accessible parking, install the veteran's memorial and add the columbarium.

The goal is to finish by the end of next year.

"With a little bit of cooperation with the weather and our volunteers, we can have a flag-raising here Veterans Day," Burke said. "That's my goal."

Seaside: Two bond measures headed to voters

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Seaside resident. He is married and the father of five children.

With three city councilors running unopposed, Barber said he looked forward to the potential of working with the same group to finish projects.

These include overseeing the \$15 million Seaside Civic and Convention Center remodel and moving schools outside the tsunami inundation zone.

Major issues in Seaside include reducing homelessness and improving the stock of workforce housing. "I'm the only candidate who has done something tangible," Barber said.

The mayor pointed to his record as a seven-year member and president of the Helping Hands Re-Entry Outreach Center's board of directors.

Because of the organization's efforts, "we're housing over 200 people every night that would otherwise be on the street," Barber said.

Chapman counters that Barber is not the only candidate who helps with the homeless. He and his wife and friends "have paid for many hotel rooms and helped many friends get back into housing," he said.

Barber described affordable housing as requiring a "multicity solution," with mayors in Astoria, Warrenton, Gearhart and Cannon Beach teaming for regional solutions. "You get things by studying them and bringing people together," he said.

Affordable housing can be accomplished without raising taxes by bringing builders, developers and nonprofits together, Barber said.

System development charges — fees paid by developers for infrastructure like roads and sewers — may need to be deferred or reduced to encourage new housing. Federal or outside dollars may also be available.

"There are some innova-

tive ways to address that," Barber said. "We've got some ideas, but we have to work together. That's why continuity is so important."

Chapman said for the community to grow in positive ways, it must be affordable for people to live here.

Developers who receive breaks must be accountable, he added. "If you build something for affordable housing, you must keep that property at the price point so you don't out-price that market."

Hood to Coast

In 2015, after high winds drove runners onto Broadway, merchants petitioned the City Council to reschedule or move the finish of the annual 198-mile Hood to Coast relay from Mount Hood to Seaside.

Chapman was among the voices calling for change.

This year, Barber and city councilors signed a five-year deal with Hood to Coast to keep the race finish in Seaside.

While Chapman said he thinks the event is "brilliant," the organization is not paying its fair share for city infrastructure and police.

"In my opinion, Hood to Coast holds Seaside to the rails, where we should be holding Hood to Coast to what we need as a community," Chapman said.

Each runner should be assessed a fee, Chapman said, to cover sewer, water, police and garbage pickup. "I would say: 'I don't want your services, but I want you to pay for services and amenities.'"

Hood to Coast revenues already pay for city services, Barber said, and the event raises hundreds of thousands of dollars for cancer research.

The Seaside Chamber of Commerce operates with earnings from the event's beer and wine sales, Barber added.

Bond measures

Two bond measures are headed to Seaside voters.

A \$20 million bond would

relocate the county jail from Astoria to the shuttered North Coast Youth Correctional Facility in Warrenton.

In South County, voters will decide a \$20 million Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District bond for expansion of the Broadway aquatic facility.

Barber said he will vote for the rec district's bond. The facility could enhance services to tourists and people living here.

"Health and fitness are important for people to support," Barber said.

While Chapman said he "loved the concept" of the expansion, "it's too soon, too quick."

The city's older population fears losing money for retirement, especially after the 2016 passage of the \$99.7 million bond to relocate schools, Chapman said.

"Every time you take tax money and add it on to something you have to evaluate its effect," Chapman said. "Do I think (Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District) would deserve something like that? Yes. Is the timing right? No. There are still questions: pricing, parking, property lines, and what's going to happen with the middle school property when that comes up for sale?"

Both the jail and rec bonds have an uphill battle with voters, Barber said.

The mayor will vote "yes" for a new jail, motivated by safety concerns and the need to replace the outmoded facility in Astoria.

"My reluctance is the tax issue," he said. "But you can't stack criminals on top of each other. I 100 percent back up a bond for a facility

that should have been there 20 years ago."

Tsunami preparedness

Seaside's position in the Cascadia Subduction Zone leaves the city vulnerable to an earthquake and tsunami.

Chapman said residents choose where to live and "hopefully don't live in fear."

In a devastating tsunami, the likelihood is "there won't be a Seaside anyway," he said, as the city would be decimated.

Chapman questioned whether to devote funds to replace aging city bridges vulnerable to collapse during an earthquake. Even if replaced, a bridge may still be standing after a disaster, but the road could be gone, he said.

Chapman sought "common-sense solutions" to emergency preparedness and would seek greater communication between neighboring cities in when to sound tsunami evacuation warnings, he said.

Barber said the first step to survival is mapping routes out of the inundation zone. That could mean replacing bridges, including Avenue U, budgeted at about \$2 million and considered "shovel ready."

"That's about a \$2 million project," Barber said. "We're working to identify those funds."

Barber will propose bringing in a professional firm to develop a strategic plan, he said. "I want authoritative assessments of those bridges to determine which will stand a 9.0 (earthquake) and which won't so we can begin to educate people, so we have a process."

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