

Seaside considers annexation plan

Forty-five lots could be in play

By R.J. MARX
The Daily Astorian

SEASIDE — Some property owners in unincorporated areas south of Seaside may have the option of annexation into the city.

Property owners who are paying up to double for water and other essential services may consider it to their advantage to join the city, which could provide more efficient public safety, Jon Rahl, the assistant city manager, said. Rural law enforcement and fire district taxes

would also be eliminated. But those gains could be offset by other costs, including higher city taxes and rezoning.

Annexation is required before land can be developed at urban density with city zoning, or to hook up to city water and other services. Property owners would be required to pay the cost of water and sewer extensions.

The annexation plan, which covers properties on Avenue U to Avenue S, was established as one of the City Council's goals for the next few years, Rahl said.

Boundaries comprise 45 lots, with about two-thirds on the east side.

In October, the city "reached out via snail mail to these 45 tax lots," Rahl said. "Some are strongly for it, some are against it."

Annexation will be decided by the City Council, Rahl said, and does not require a majority vote by property owners. "The City Council and city want to hear from every property owner — and we are continuing to work on that effort — but the decision whether to annex or not is one that will be made by the City Council at a later date," he said after Monday's City Council meeting.

The city will await more responses from property owners before taking next steps, Rahl said.



R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian

Some properties on both sides of Avenue S could be annexed into Seaside.

Backers of Vancouver-Portland ferry looking for financial support

An alternative to driving

By MOLLY SOLOMON
Oregon Public Broadcasting

Backers of a new project are making a bold pitch to Portland metro drivers: Leave your car at home and consider a commute by ferry.

The vision from the group Frog Ferry is for passenger ferries to run along the Columbia and Willamette rivers, carrying up to 149 passengers daily from Vancouver's Terminal 1 to downtown Portland.

"We are truly looking at new transportation options," said Susan Bladholm, president and founder of the nonprofit Friends of Frog Ferry.

Bladholm spoke to reporters Tuesday morning in front of the Willamette River and the Tilikum Crossing bridge to drum up support for the project. The organization is looking for money from public agencies and private donors to begin a series of feasibility studies.



Molly Solomon/Oregon Public Broadcasting
Susan Bladholm is the founder and president of the nonprofit Friends of Frog Ferry. The organization is proposing a passenger ferry service to run along the Columbia and Willamette rivers.

"This is more than doable," she said. "This is way past time."

The ferry project already has one notable backer: Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler. His chief of staff, Michael Cox, announced the mayor's full support in using city dollars to fund a portion of the study.

"We know we'll have to find funding," Cox said. "The

city is willing to step up and do our part and lead a conversation with other jurisdictions to get all the money on the table."

It's unclear how much the city of Portland would contribute to the \$650,000 feasibility study.

The Frog Ferry project is still in the early stages and will need significant financial support to progress. Bladholm says

five feasibility studies and a financial plan are expected to cost \$1.3 million.

It's unclear how much the ferry service would alleviate congestion for Clark County commuters, Washington, but organizers estimate a single ferry would take 500 cars off the Interstate 5 bridge. According to the Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council, more than 135,000 cars cross the I-5 bridge daily.

Bladholm says she has reached out to city officials and state agencies in southwest Washington and has put in funding requests to the city of Vancouver, the Port of Vancouver and CTRAN, the second largest transit system in the region.

Vancouver Mayor Anne McEnery-Ogle said she wasn't invited to Tuesday's event but has had at least one meeting with organizers from

Frog Ferry.

"The council does not have it in our strategic plan, it's not in our transportation plan, and it's not in our city budget," McEnery-Ogle told Oregon Public Broadcasting, explaining that Vancouver has made no financial commitments to the project.

"But we look forward to seeing how it progresses in Portland and having that conversation in the future."

Tuesday's event did include one person from southwest Washington, Port of Vancouver economic development manager Jim Hagar.

The port's Terminal 1 property is currently undergoing its own transformation, alongside the city of Vancouver's recently opened waterfront project. Port leaders plan to open a public market, a hotel and additional office and retail space. Organizers say the river ferry service

could also serve as an alternative route for tourists visiting Vancouver's new waterfront.

But if the project does move forward, Hagar said there would need to be adjustments to the dock at Terminal 1 and more parking would need to be built.

"We don't know where this is going, but we're supportive of the concept," Hagar said.

If the money can be found, organizers say ferry service could start as soon as 2022.

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