



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Fresh water is an issue in Falcon Cove.

# Water: ‘This is an issue I bet isn’t going to go away’

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So far, the moratorium has only impacted two people hoping to build homes. But in the long term, the situation is forcing the water district to look for alternatives. The county is also reconsidering how the water district can prove properties can be served by enough water.

The issue in Falcon Cove was presented last week to the county Board of Commissioners. Some commissioners see access to water as a long-term challenge for several special districts across the county, especially as the population in rural areas continues to grow.

Commissioner Kathleen Sullivan said many people who live on the coast don't think there is a water shortage.

“This brings home the reality that, yes, water is our concern also, and that we need to be mindful of that,” she said.

### Exploring alternatives

Water shortages in Falcon Cove can mainly be attributed to record low flows from the area's main spring and increased development, according to a water district memo. The last long-term plan, done in 2004, projected the water district would be fully built out at 147 homes. Now, the district expects 220 homes.

The dramatic growth in homes being used as vacation rentals is also contributing to the problem. Vacation rentals have brought a significant increase in demand during the time of year with the least amount of water.

An engineering study in September showed the system would not be sustainable if the area was fully built out, said Charles Dice, the secretary and system operator for the water district's board.

The water district is exploring different ways to offer alternatives to people interested in building during the moratorium. One option is trucking in water and storing it in holding tanks.

“I wanted to come up here and kind of lobby for our lot owners,” Dice told county commissioners. “As a water board, we feel really badly we can't give them the water connection they need.”

### Long-term approach

The county has reservations about approving alternative systems during the

moratorium, particularly because there is no requirement for property owners to connect to the water district's system once it is lifted.

“It's just better planning practice,” Gail Henrikson, the county's community development director, said in reference to having homes all be part of one water system.

Another concern is the water district's proposal to use holding tanks and trucked-in water. The county already has a number of water alternatives on the books, Henrikson said.

But before any building permits can be approved, the county and water district will have to come to a new agreement.

Currently, the county requests a letter from the water district guarantee-

ing enough water for a new development. In order for alternatives to work, this checks-and-balances method needs to be more flexible, Henrikson said, so that homeowners seeking to use alternative systems like rain catchment or a well can prove to the county their system meets county code.

As of now, there is no way to verify through the county or the water district whether the holding tank system would comply with county code.

“What we're looking for is something that documents they can meet our code of 250 gallons a day,” Henrikson said.

Dice argues that holding tanks and rain catchment systems are similar, but that the tanks offer more reliability.

“As an engineer, I don't see a big difference between this and a rainwater system, especially in these drought years the last three years,” Dice continued. “I would much rather call someone up and have someone deliver my water rather than sit around and pray to the rain Gods and hope that it rains.”

In the meantime, the water district has passed a water conservation ordinance and commissioned a well feasibility study to identify new sources.

But water availability needs to stay on the commission's to-do list, Commissioner Pamela Wev said.

“This is an issue I bet isn't going to go away,” she said. “And it'd be really terrific if we could begin to do some thinking on the long term.”

# Seaside: The City Council will hear the appeal on Jan. 28

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Main & Main's Dan Dover said the turn-lane requirement was unfair. “They can't preclude an existing property from access to the highway,” he said.

Michael Ard, the developer's traffic consultant, provided data showing “vehicles never stacked very deep and within a

minute or two, it always unwound,” Dover said. “It's not like you're going to have a pile of cars.”

Risks to drivers and pedestrians along the 35 mph highway are “extremely negligible,” he added.

The turn lane is “a self-imposed requirement by the city with no factual backup,” Dover said. “They've done no studies

to show it is required. Yes, it will improve the situation in the future, and DOT has demonstrated that, but it's not a requirement to access Highway 101. We are within the parameters that DOT can allow this project to proceed.”

The Planning Commission did offer Main & Main an alternative, amending their findings to offer the developer a

right-in, right out driveway from the property.

That's not enough, the developer says.

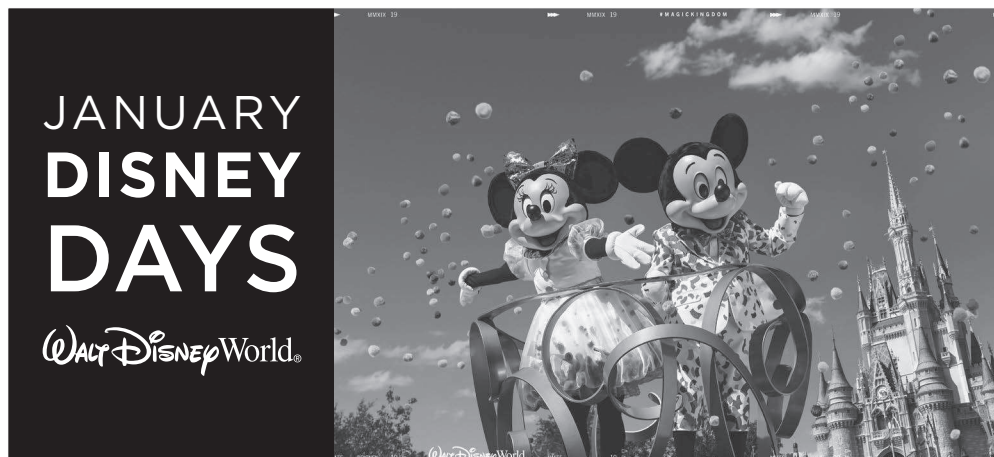
“Right-in, right-out totally limits people's ability to go into and out of that site,” Dover said.

He estimates it would cut store traffic in half. “It's a deal killer.”

The City Council will hear the appeal on Jan. 28.

“Our hope is they would uphold the approval

but remove the condition to improve the intersection,” Dover said. “Owners of commercial property, especially along the highway corridor, have the right to access the highway.”



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