

Cove Beach: ‘I feel there’s a big communication gap’

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Paparoni filed a public records request to access the data the water district used to come to their conclusion.

Paparoni has a Ph.D. in economic geology and Rozendaal has a Ph.D. in climate science. They decided to use their expertise to examine the data themselves.

They looked at multiple sources, including data reported to the state of how much water is produced by the spring, data recorded by the water district using water meters and data measured by independent weather stations in Cove Beach and Manzanita.

They concluded there is no water shortage. The water district could not be reached for comment.

“The goal here is not to fix it. The goal here is to maintain lack of development and they’re doing it through the duration of an emergency that doesn’t exist,” Paparoni said. “And because an emergency doesn’t exist, the moratorium is without a technical basis. You cannot have a moratorium without an emergency.”

David Livermore, a hydrogeologist who has been coming to his family home in Cove Beach since the 1960s, shared Paparoni’s research on his website. He also came to the same conclusion as Paparoni about the water supply.

Livermore ran for a seat on the water district’s board in May, but lost.

“I feel there’s a big communication gap,” said Nancy Chase, a longtime homeowner in Cove Beach.

She said she asked the water district to send Paparoni’s report to their engineers for comment. She is waiting to hear why their conclusion was different from Livermore’s and Paparoni’s, but has been given no estimate as to how long it will take.

“We have laypeople on the board who are doing their best to understand it. But there is an undercurrent whenever I talk to anybody ... that short-term rentals and too many homes are being put in comes up as a concern,” Chase said.

Transparency

Like Paparoni, she wants to have open and transparent discussions about the moratorium and make sure decisions are based on facts.

They also both want meeting notices, minutes, data and other information to be made public online so that everyone can have access.

Chase said meeting notices are usually posted at the post office, so people who live out of town do not know when there is a meeting.

Paparoni said the water district needs to engage the community.



Nicole Bales/The Astorian

The county requires each property to provide 250 gallons of water per day from their own water source.

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Nancy Chase | longtime homeowner in Cove Beach

“All members of the community,” he said. “So the ones that live there full time, the ones that live there part time, the ones that rent, the ones who have lots.”

Nihad Aweidah owns a parcel in Cove Beach and attended the water district’s October board meeting to learn how they came to the conclusion to declare a moratorium.

“They have not been forthcoming with information,” he said.

Aweidah said he asked the water district to create a centralized database to share information, data and meeting minutes to increase transparency. He said he offered to organize the information on Google Drive.

He wants to develop his property, but is hesitant about finding an alternate water supply, as it would increase his building costs significantly. He is also unclear about the water district’s timeline on improvements or how

long the moratorium will be in effect.

Paparoni and Chase said they have expressed their concerns to Commissioner Lianne Thompson, who represents South County.

“It’s the fundamental level of public service in our isolated rural neighborhood ... and it’s a critical human need to have water for personal use and to fight fires, wildfires,” Thompson said of the water district. “So, it’s essential that we have an accountable, transparent government for all stakeholders.”

Thompson said there’s room for improvement.

“If I had known about this I would have never had bought the property because this is incredible,” Paparoni said. “We bought the property to retire and relax. But OK, we own it now and the right thing to do is fix this and it’s going to take a community effort to fix this.”

“We shouldn’t have situations like this, it’s just not right.”

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