

IN BRIEF

Coastal flood advisory, high wind warning in effect for North Coast

A coastal flood advisory and high wind warning were issued for the North Coast on Monday.

Tidal overflow flooding was expected until Monday afternoon and then again Tuesday afternoon.

The tide in Astoria was forecast to reach about 10.5 feet during the high tide early Monday afternoon and 11.3 feet during the high tide Tuesday afternoon.

Minor flooding, up to a foot above ground level, during high tides is expected in low-lying areas near bays, sloughs and the lower reaches of the coastal rivers.

High south winds could blow down trees and power lines. The wind could also cause power outages and create difficult driving conditions.

Officials say to avoid forested areas, trees, branches and windows.

Authorities requesting public's assistance in finding elk poachers

Authorities are seeking the public's help in finding poachers who killed two elk and left them near U.S. Highway 26.

Officials say both elk were found on private timberlands but not together. The cases are likely not related.

The first elk was likely shot by a rifle on Oct. 14 or Oct. 15. Officials suspect someone shot the elk on Clatsop County forestland near the U.S. Highway 26 rest stop, likely near McGregor State Forest Road.

The second elk was killed in an unknown location with an unknown weapon on or about Oct 16. The poacher reportedly removed the head, two legs and the back strap. The carcass was dumped down an embankment off of Sugarloaf Mainline.

Anyone who heard shots fired or noticed unusual activity near McGregor State Forest Road or the U.S. Highway 26 rest stop are asked to contact Oregon State Police.

The Turn In Poachers program will award four hunter preference points or \$500 for information that leads to a citation in either of these cases.

Police seek assistance in Seaside Elks burglary

SEASIDE — The Seaside Elks Lodge was burglarized Nov. 10 at about 2:30 a.m.

Burglars took cash that was being raised to help provide food baskets for the holidays. Baskets are given to families in need.

Anyone with information is asked to contact the Seaside Police Department at 503-738-6311.

Weather, material availability delays Seaside school campus completion

SEASIDE — Plastic pieces on the track and replacement of the weather barrier are among issues delaying exterior work into January at the high school and middle school of the new Seaside school campus.

The Seaside School District has an occupancy permit from the city and punch list items are expected to be complete by mid-December. Final landscape planting is underway and the city reservoir water system is complete.

The biggest job ahead is replacement of 22,000 linear square feet of weather barrier after the first application failed to meet specifications. The project, estimated at \$2.5 million, will be covered by insurance.

Remediation started in late August, but the schedule has slid a little bit, project manager Jim Henry said, both because of weather and delays in procuring materials.

— The Astorian

Gearhart school sold to local residents

By R.J. MARX
The Astorian

GEARHART — New owners closed on Gearhart Elementary School on Monday.

Scofi Gearhart, an Oregon LLC, purchased the property for \$500,000, which included a \$100,000 educational grant to the seller in addition to the \$400,000 purchase price, Seaside School District Superintendent Susan Penrod said.

The managing member is Robert S. "Bob" Morey. The other member is Timi Morey. Both are Gearhart residents.

On Monday, trees at the 8.5-acre property along Pacific Way were being pruned and removed.

Over the next few weeks playground equipment will be removed, Morey said, with most of the equipment relocated to the new elementary school site on Spruce Drive in Seaside. All sports field equipment will also be removed.

The site will be fenced and closed to public access by the end of the year.

"Creating something welcoming and visually interesting when entering the city is the goal," Morey said. "We look forward to working cooperatively with the council, staff, and the community to achieve something special."

The sales announcement caught Gearhart leaders by surprise.

Mayor Matt Brown said he was deeply concerned about the lack of transparency during the acquisition process.

"It is unfortunate that you have decided to take a secretive and adversarial tone in your new acquisition of the Gearhart school property," Brown wrote. "As a citizen, public official, and former student of Gearhart Elementary I believe our youth and community needs should be put first and foremost ahead of profits."

Brown objected to the fencing of the property which could block access to the property to the community and youth sports.

In an email to the Moreys, the school district and the city, City Councilor Reita Fackerell said she was upset to read that the school property would be fenced off and that all playground equipment would be removed.

"I believe that the citizens of Gearhart will be angry as well," Fackerell said. "My hope is that we can work together to continue to provide park and recreational space for our community with no impediments whatsoever."

The site is designated public/semi-public, zoning code

limits used for a government facility, community meeting building, public service use or educational purposes. Any planned development of the property would need to go through the public rezoning process and no new commercial zoning can be created under the city's comprehensive plan.

In mid-July, the school district authorized Penrod to enter purchase negotiations with the Moreys.

Originally listed at \$1.9 million, the school district lowered the price to \$1.2 million earlier this year before authorizing the sale in August at \$750,000.

When that deal didn't materialize, the school district lowered the price and entertained additional bids.

In late-October, the school district opened talks with Jeff Bodner, a general contractor, and Celeste Bodner, founder and executive director of Foster Club.

At a City Council meeting this month, the Bodners proposed to repurpose and revitalize the school building as a community hub for arts and cultural activity, community gathering and as a place for philanthropic organizations, such as the Foster Club.

Morey, who participated in the Gearhart meeting electronically, did not provide

details of his plans at the time.

Brown addressed that in his letter to the Moreys this week.

"As you know we gave all parties interested in the property a chance to publicly speak at our last City Council meeting and you decided not to inform the public on your vision, plan, or intention," Brown said.

He asked the Moreys to include the whole community in the planning process, and to "put transparency and the intentions of the comprehensive plan at the forefront of any decision you make."

Mayor-elect Paulina Cockrum said she was shocked by the Moreys intentions to close off the school yard open space with fences and intentionally limit residents from walking and playing in the longstanding recreational space.

"I hope that a satisfactory solution to the property can be worked out in the future," Cockrum wrote in an email.

Morey, his engineer and architect will look at existing structures with an architect and structural engineer in December, he said.

"We will be collaborating with the entire community of Gearhart as we determine the best long term uses of the former elementary school property," he said. "This will not be a rushed process."

Officer honored at City Council farewell

Holt served 37 years with Seaside police

By R.J. MARX
The Astorian

SEASIDE — The city's longest-serving employee took a bow last week as the City Council commended Lt. Bruce Holt for 37 years of service to the police department and the city.

"We have a special opportunity to recognize Bruce Holt, who's retiring after 37 years of service to the city of Seaside," Mayor Jay Barber said. "You have shown a great deal of respect to all with whom you have come in contact with and will be greatly missed."

With family in the audience and many more watching remotely, Holt was recognized for his commitment to the community and his professional leadership.

A video presentation offered glimpses of Holt throughout his career — usually, but not always, sporting his trademark mustache.



Brian Owen

Lt. Bruce Holt receives a plaque from Seaside Mayor Jay Barber at last week's City Council meeting where he was honored for his service.

Holt served as a reserve officer in 1982 and was hired by the Seaside Police Department in 1983. He was promoted to senior officer in 1987 and sergeant in 1989. He received a detective role in the mid-1990s and was promoted to lieutenant in June 2016.

"Service with a smile" was his motto, whether in the station, entertaining young people in the classroom, refereeing a ball game or at a community barbecue.

Barber and councilors stressed Holt's roles as president of the Seaside Rotary, church member, and with his

wife Dana, foster parents to more than 70 children over the years.

Holt played a key role in keeping alive the memory of Sgt. Jason Gooding, a Seaside officer who was killed in 2016.

"Every year you've been there to remind us of his service, and the fact that he paid the ultimate price of his leadership in the community," Barber said. "That's what really resonated with me. Not only your heart for Jason but for all of the guys and gals that served in the police department."

Holt now serves with the Oregon chapter of C.O.P.S., a national nonprofit dedicated to the concerns of police survivors.

Holt thanked his parents for instilling a commitment to service in the community, which he promised to maintain after leaving the department.

"It's going to continue to be our pleasure to be involved," Holt said.

He thanked Chief Dave Ham for choosing him as lieutenant and the city and councilors for their support and guidance.

"Thank you on behalf of our entire family to give us the opportunity to serve this community," Holt said. "We have enjoyed it."

Councilors and staff followed with their own salutes to the lieutenant, including some who have known him for decades.

"I am lucky to be able to be able to call Bruce a friend and it's been an honor to serve with him," City Manager Mark Winstanley said. "We're going to miss him a lot."

Seaside grapples with managing homeless

By R.J. MARX
The Astorian

SEASIDE — The City Council has asked the police chief, city attorney and city manager what can be done to manage the growing number of homeless in Seaside.

The workshop this month came after Mayor Jay Barber sounded an alarm about chronic homelessness, with increasing numbers of people living on the city's wooded fringes, riverbanks or in cars.

"The purpose of this meeting is to educate the council so we can begin to involve the community to get input from everybody affected by both those who are homeless and those in the surrounding areas impacted by people who are homeless," Barber said. "In the city's attempt to deal with this, we've come up with all types of challenges being able to work with people who are homeless. What are our options to deal with this issue in our community?"

Those options are limited, City Attorney Dan Van Thiel said. "Frustration is probably the key word that I could use here."



R.J. Marx/The Astorian

A person sleeps in the Seaside Civic and Convention Center parking lot.

Federal court decisions in Boise, Idaho, and Grants Pass have determined homelessness is not a crime, and cities cannot prevent the homeless from voluntarily sitting, lying or sleeping in public, Van Thiel said.

"The answer quite simply is we are not going to be arresting these people," he said.

In most instances, police act as a referral to housing, mental health or drug addiction resources, Police Chief Dave Ham said.

When behaviors cross over to littering, fighting in public or violations of open

container laws, police may issue citations.

Since many who are homeless often don't have cellphones or a permanent residence, making contact is difficult.

"When someone is trying to contact them to follow up it might just be the second bench on Avenue I on the Prom between 10 and 11 a.m.," Ham said.

Without adequate social service response or treatment, it's like trying to put a Band-Aid on the problem, with very few resources for police departments, Ham said.

"Cities, especially small cities, don't have the resources nor are we capable of providing these resources," Ham said.

City Councilor Tita Mon-

tero sought to expand the conversation to the people at the center of the topic: the homeless.

"You cannot solve a situation in a vacuum," Montero said. "You cannot solve it without the input of the people experiencing it. We really need to make an effort to include them."

"I don't believe we're going to solve this problem," Barber said. "I want to understand it. I want our community to understand it and understand how they could be positive and constructive about helping people who are in this quandary of their lives. It's impacting all of us, but not nearly as much as those who are suffering homelessness. We need to be concerned about them."

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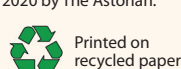
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