

IN BRIEF

Pop-up vaccination clinic planned in Cannon Beach

Clatsop County on Wednesday will host a pop-up coronavirus vaccination clinic in Cannon Beach.

People 18 and older can walk into the Cannon Beach Chamber of Commerce from 5 to 7 p.m. and receive the one-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

The county has set a target of vaccinating 27,533 people — or 70% of the population — to try to achieve herd immunity against the virus. As of Friday, 17,973 people have been fully vaccinated.

County commissioners approve budget

County commissioners on Wednesday night approved the budget for the fiscal year that starts in July.

The budget is \$109.9 million, up from \$102.5 million this fiscal year.

The board approved an increase of \$50,000 for capital purchases and projects in the special projects fund to complete the data and fiber connection project for the sheriff's office and Clatsop County Jail. The projects were budgeted for in this fiscal year, but because they have not been completed the offsetting revenue will roll into the beginning balance of the new budget.

Park district, education group close in on rec center lease

SEASIDE — The Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District moved closer to a deal with the Northwest Regional Education Service District to lease a portion of Sunset Recreation Center.

The service district is in the process of selling their 29,000-square-foot Clatsop Service Center in Astoria. They hope to lease a 7,600-square-foot space in the Sunset Recreation Center.

The proposed two-year lease at Sunset Recreation Center includes an annual rental amount payable in quarterly installments. It also includes a small percentage increase each year of 1.5% to the agreed upon amount set, said Skyler Archibald, the park district's executive director.

— The Astorian

Oregon House expels Nearman for role in Capitol breach

SALEM — Mike Nearman became the first state legislator to be expelled in Oregon's 162 years of statehood for his part in aiding anti-lockdown protesters, some of them armed, to breach the closed Capitol during a Dec. 21 special session of the Legislature.

On a 59-1 vote Thursday night, the House concluded that Nearman engaged in "disorderly behavior" when he opened a door and allowed some protesters to enter the Capitol's northwest vestibule. Police eventually ejected them and blocked their second attempt to breach a different entrance to the Capitol later that day. Several people were arrested.

Nearman was the lone vote against his expulsion.
— Oregon Capital Bureau

ON THE RECORD

Strangulation

• Erkan Koyuncu, 31, of Gearhart, was arraigned Thursday on charges of strangulation, assault in the fourth degree and menacing.

Assault

• Margaret Katerina Wilski, 22, of Long Beach, Washington, was arraigned Wednesday on charges of assault in the second degree, criminal mischief in the first degree and unlawful use of a weapon.

Theft

• Stacia Nicole Erhardt, 31, of Vernonia, was arraigned Wednesday on charges of aggravated identity theft, theft in the first degree and 18 counts of identity theft.

DUI

• Devontae Leshawn Gravely, 28, of Wood Village, was arrested Thursday on U.S. Highway 101 for driving under the influence of intoxicants and assault in the fourth degree.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

MONDAY

Seaside City Council, 7 p.m., 989 Broadway St.

TUESDAY

Clatsop County Board of Commissioners, 10 a.m., work session, (electronic meeting).

Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District Board of Directors, 5:15 p.m., 1225 Avenue A, Seaside.

Astoria Historic Landmarks Commission, 5:30 p.m., City Hall, 1095 Duane St.

Seaside School District, 6 p.m., (electronic meeting).

Seaside Planning Commission, 6 p.m., work session, 989 Broadway.

Gearhart Small Business Committee, 6 p.m., (electronic meeting).

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GULLS FLY



TOP: Supporters cheer on Tatum La Plante as she enters the Turnaround to graduate from Seaside High School on Thursday. **LEFT:** Seaside High School graduates received their diplomas at the Turnaround. **BELOW:** The Seaside High School Class of 2021 parade down Broadway.

Photos by Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian



Gearhart moves closer to new firehouse site

A bond vote likely in November

By R.J. MARX
The Astorian

GEARHART — An ideal elevation, a more convenient location and cost savings of up to \$4 million are selling points for a new firehouse and police station at Highlands Lane.

Officials hope to bring a portion of a 36-acre lot on Highlands Lane owned by Cottages at Gearhart LLC into the city's urban growth boundary.

The City Council approved up to \$80,000 from the building reserve fund for due diligence in planning, architecture and geotechnical engineering services at the site. This will provide residents, the Planning Commission and City Council with information to decide whether to move forward with a bond vote in November.

"I would like nothing more than to be on the ballot in November," Mayor Paulina Cockrum said.

After six or seven years of research and preparation to move the fire station to higher ground, "it feels like it's in alignment" this year, the mayor said.

If approved, the city will save an estimated \$3 million to \$3.5 million on what would have been required for purchase of land on North Marion, City Attorney Peter Watts said, and the project would be significantly simplified without potential eminent domain issues associated with the High Point location.

In March, costs at High Point were estimated at \$13.5 million, including construction and land acquisition.

Zoned within Clatsop County, after a potential urban growth boundary exchange, Cottages at Gearhart developers would benefit from increased housing density under city zoning code.

The Cottages at Gearhart purchased the property in 2018 for \$649,000.

Even if a bond vote failed, the Highlands Lane property could be used for housing or a fire station at a later date.

"Whether voters authorize a fire station, we have a future site that they can go to, and then we have a park, that certainly would be a benefit to the city," Watts said.

The Highlands Lane property comes with a park and potential workforce housing, which could help recruit volunteer firefighters.

"A lot of communities have had to go with full-time professionals, because it's becoming so difficult to recruit volunteers," Watts said. "So anything that we can do to make them more attractive for people to volunteer, that will be significant financial savings to the city."

The Highlands site is closer to where volunteers generally live, "and so it should hopefully be easier for them to respond," he added.

According to the timeline presented at Tuesday's City Council meeting, site investigation, conceptual design and the urban growth boundary land exchange are underway.

City Councilor Brent Warren said the No. 1 thing to determine was "the preliminary pulse of the people." "And that seems to be really crucial," he said.

A public survey could help the public "move forward with confidence," Cockrum added. "I, for one, think this is worth the time — whatever it takes to get the word out," she said.

Public comment would take place between June 28 and July 12, with the anticipation that the bond vote would be filed with the county in August for a November vote. The bond vote could be pushed to next spring, or November 2022, Watts said, but the risk of waiting is that favorable bond rates could vanish.

City councilors unanimously voted to approve funds for the due diligence.

The building reserve fund has \$122,000 and is anticipated to receive another \$100,000 in funds from the new city budget and from the federal coronavirus relief aid.

"We believe this will be a good way to spend those funds," City Administrator Chad Sweet said. "We've done a lot of work to get this down as tight as possible without wasting any money. This will allow us to get some good information."

Watts said he is grateful for the developers to be willing to do the deal.

"They've been very easy to work with with," Watts said. "Whether or not their motive is primarily profit driven, or they also want to see Gearhart thrive, they are deeding the city property and I appreciate the fact that they're willing to do that. This might be in their financial benefit. It's certainly in ours."

"Because whether or not voters authorize a fire station, we have a future site and a park that certainly would be a benefit to the city. I'm happy that this seems like it can go forward."

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