

OPINION



the Astorian

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We know

In 1910, it was the centerpiece of town. The crown jewel and economic engine of Gearhart stood at the western end of Pacific Way. Theodore Kruse's huge hotel Gearhart by the Sea was described in the Seaside Signal, July 25, 1910, as having 100 elegantly furnished rooms and a porch-dining room to seat 250.

In five years time, it was gone; leveled by penny-pinching and all around poor planning in a fiery disaster.

Just two years before, in 1913, the smaller but beautiful Queen Anne-style Gearhart Hotel, located where the City Hall now stands, burnt to the ground when the fire trucks that came from Seaside discovered there were no hydrants to hook into.

Now, two years later, with the grand hotel on fire, again Seaside sent fire trucks. This time the hoses and the hydrant taps did not match!

So what did we learn from this? We soon incorporated into a city, so we could issue bonds for fire and other community safety.

But, as Bill Berg said in "Gearhart Remembered," "this meant, necessarily, that from 1918 onward the interests of Gearhart city government were basically different from, and sometimes in conflict with, the interests of Gearhart promoters and developers."

Today, we know there are a tsunami and other natural or unnatural disasters coming, just like they knew they needed fire service in 1915. So is it penny-pinching or community safety? Please vote "yes" on bond Measure 4-213.

CAROL LUCAS
Gearhart

Time to come together

There is widespread agreement among Gearhart residents that we need a new fire station. We may not agree on the station cost; \$14.5 million seems like a big number, and if I had to foot the entire bill myself, I couldn't.

Fortunately, we live in a community where citizens band together to accomplish things that benefit all of us and would be impossible on our own. When \$14.5 million is shared among all property owners, the debt is amortized over 20 years, the number becomes more manageable.

Based on my home's assessed value, and depending on which bond scenario the city chooses, my annual taxes will go up by about \$250 or \$350 (less than a dollar a day) for the first three years, then they will go down. The city understands that any tax increase can be difficult for some, and is already exploring the possibility of a tax assistance program for low- and moderate-income households.

Just focusing on the total construction cost distracts us from how the bond will affect us as individual taxpayers. It minimizes the difference between cost and value.

The majority of Gearhart residents appreciate the dedication of our heroic first responders and their families. We cannot afford any further delays in providing them with a modern and safe fire and police station. The longer we delay, the more it is going to cost all of us.

Join me in voting "yes" on Measure 4-213 by May 17.
BRENT WARREN
Gearhart City Councilor

Proud endeavor

It is an undeniable fact that firefighters save countless lives and billions of dollars in property damage every year. Not having a safe and adequate fire station, that can support our volunteer firemen and women, should be cause for concern for all who have chosen to live in a tsunami inundation zone on our isolated stretch of coastline.

In addition to two paid staff, Gearhart is fortunate to have 27 volunteer firefighters and emergency medical technicians, many of whom have spent countless hours in fire, medical and emergency response training.

In some cities, firefighters spend large sums of money and time in training, and are well paid for their efforts. Gearhart's fire brigade is primarily volunteer, eight of whom are women. This is something to be proud of.

A new fire and police facility would provide separate bathrooms, showers and changing rooms for women, and a place for volunteers to work out in preparation to safely do their jobs — something they don't have right now. It would also provide for around-the-clock on-duty staffing, adequately sized gear lockers, and dedicated decontamination space for equipment.

Let's not forget these are unpaid volunteers. We're lucky to live in a community where so many are willing to step up to serve others. Why would anyone oppose such a positive and proud endeavor as a new resilient fire and police facility?

Let's all vote "yes" for Measure 4-213 on May 17, and show our public safety workers the support and encouragement they deserve.

DIANE SPEAKMAN
Gearhart

Deservedly need

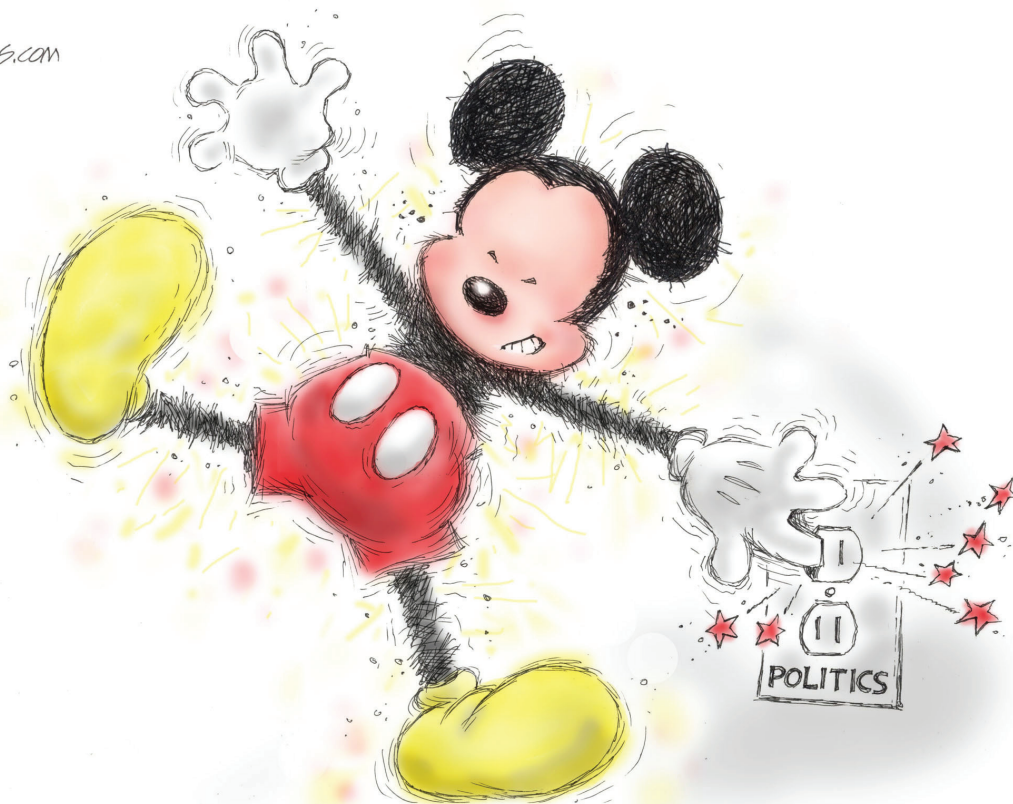
I am writing to ask my fellow Gearhart community members to vote "yes" on Gearhart bond Measure 4-213.

The measure does ask a lot from us. But in my opinion, funding a new fire and police station that replaces the present inadequate one, that is located in an inundation zone, gives back to the livability and safety of our community more than it asks of us in funding.

A new building is expensive, but putting it off will cost more. The return on our investment is money well spent for our community's present and future. I am thankful our city leaders are being proactive, so as not to have to be scrambling to provide unprepared for emergency disaster services.

"Keep Gearhart, Gearhart" is a phrase often heard in our community. While it means different things to different people, I hope you will vote "yes" to provide our wonderful, selfless and hardworking safety officers and

Dick Wright
GAGLEARTOONS.COM



volunteers the space and equipment they deservedly need to provide for the everyday lifesaving services Gearhart needs to be Gearhart.

CHRIS BELL
Gearhart

The real bottom line

Owning a home in Gearhart since 1992 has never been dull. An honest debate on town issues is always invigorating. But the battle over a new fire and police station is downright gnarly.

The proposed \$14.5 million price tag has poison tongues wagging. To find clarity on what my tax increase would be, I looked at my home's assessed value and had an awakening.

Gearhart's assessed property values are especially, thankfully, low. For the first three years of the bond, I would pay about 93 cents a day extra in tax and, as the water bonds are paid off, the price tag drops to less than a quarter and dime a day. Money well spent.

It's critically important to challenge the twisted facts and focus on the real fiscal bottom line: Saving lives. Those precious lives of our family, friends and naysayers alike.

Our awesome paid staff and volunteer first responders know they may be risking their life each time a call comes in. But they are there for us. We need to be there for them.

Yes the tsunami threat is real — it scares the bejesus out of me — yet personal disasters like a chimney fire, highway crash and heart attack are possible every single day. A vote "no" won't make these go away.

Gearhart is growing, and so will the calls. A vote "yes" for Measure 4-213 replaces an outdated crumbling firehouse, provides the tools, training and higher ground facility our town needs. Come together. Vote "yes!"

VICKIE ABRAHAMSON
Gearhart

What price is safety?

What does \$14.5 million look like to me? It looks like safety and survival for my family. Passing bond Measure 4-213 is crucial to safeguarding our loved ones and neighbors.

What does \$14.5 million look like to me and you? Saying "yes" to the bond gives our first responders the home, tools and training facility critical to our survival in a car crash, fire and God forbid, tsunami. Fourteen and a half million dollars seemed like a scary monster number until I figured out my own share based on our property's assessed value.

A "yes" vote will add the cost of a daily McDonald's coffee, about \$1.14 a day, to my taxes. This will be money well spent, a very good value. Definitely not a monster.

The need for a new fire and police station will not go away. Our current facility is crumbling, inadequate for our modern-day needs. Call the fire department non-emergency number for a tour of our current station.

If we don't do this now, we will only be revisiting this issue in the near future, at a much higher cost to all of us. Construction costs increase with each passing year, they don't decrease.

Please, let's do this by joining together! Support our fire and police with a "yes." It is an investment in a resilient future for our priceless Gearhart community.

JEANNE MARK
Gearhart

Protect our volunteers

Gearhart got a new school; it now needs a new fire station. The present-day school for Gearhart and Seaside children opened in 2021 in the foothills of Seaside.

It is important to remember that the new school was moved because the residents of these communities, including many without school-age children, saw the value of protecting our children, teachers and school workers if a tsunami hits.

We now need to protect Gearhart as a whole, and build a new fire station. Here's why, here are the facts:

1. Our present day Gearhart fire station was built in 1958 by a coalition of firefighter volunteers. It was made of hollow cinder blocks and, like the old school, is in a tsunami inundation zone, and will not withstand an earthquake, let alone a tsunami, making it useless in a natural disaster.

2. Our fire station is also too small, and cannot effec-

tively accommodate our eight women and 19 men volunteers. Currently there are no separate restrooms, showers or dressing rooms.

3. Modern-day first responders require a facility that has space for equipment, storage, training and decontamination, none of which is available in our existing meager fire station.

It is crucial that we know these facts as we vote. Just as we moved our school to high ground, we must now do the same with a new fire station. Please vote "yes" on Measure 4-213 and protect our volunteers who, in turn, protect us.

WILSON MARK
Gearhart

So many issues

The proposed Gearhart fire station and the development of a subdivision on property south of Highlands Lane concerns me a great deal. This proposal will only work if the Clatsop County Planning Commission and the Board of Commissioners agree that the land should be included in the Gearhart urban growth boundary.

Including this land into the urban growth boundary is a very lengthy process with public hearings for concerned citizens. A preapplication county hearing with the developers and 30 neighbors in January 2020 met with opposition. Concerns were the elk population and butterfly habitat preservation areas.

In March 2020, Warrenton adopted a moratorium which prohibited the issuance of new water connections outside the incorporated boundaries of Warrenton. This water restriction for the Clatsop Plains is still in effect.

The developers in the spring of 2021 realized the land could not be developed unless they had Gearhart water.

Clatsop Plains communities are concerned about water quality and quantity and want to initiate a moratorium on building homes with septic systems on less than one acre. Because Gearhart gets their drinking water from the Clatsop Plains aquifer, will higher housing density affect the city's future water supply?

There are so many issues with this land to be considered. Please vote "no" on the Gearhart fire station bond measure.

DEANNA MANCILL
Gearhart

Security and safety

We retired to Gearhart after falling in love with its peaceful and beautiful surroundings, along with the friendly community.

For us, safety was, and is, a priority! We all want to feel secure that in case of criminal activity, fire or medical emergency, responders are prepared and able to come to our aid.

Unfortunately, Gearhart's aging fire and police station, built in the 1950s, are inadequate for our full time and volunteer responders' safety needs, and most likely will not withstand a future catastrophic event, like an earthquake or tsunami.

A new fire and police station being located at a higher elevation, as was done with the school being moved for this reason, will provide us with the security and safety that our community needs going forward.

Please vote "yes" on bond Measure 4-213.

BRAD and GEORGIA WENGER
Gearhart

Now is the time

As a resident of Gearhart, I believe that a fire and rescue facility is an essential service for any community in order to protect people and property and to retain a well-trained volunteer force.

Our town currently has a facility that is structurally insecure in even a minor seismic event and is in a location that is apt to be swamped in case of a major tsunami.

The Gearhart Fire Department has a truly great group of volunteers — they are dedicated, ready and able to cope with our emergencies in spite of being housed in a crumbling, crowded, unsafe building.

I believe that now is the time to build a new fire and rescue facility in an accessible location — one that can serve the citizens of our area while keeping our volunteers and their equipment safe from quake and tsunami damage.

Please vote "yes" for Measure 4-213.

RUSS TAGGARD
Gearhart