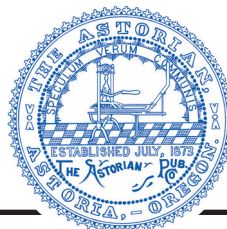


OPINION

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the Astorian

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

All that they do

I don't want to be a firefighter! This takes a certain class of people willing to go into a raging fire to put it out, or pull people out of the flames — sometimes with really bad outcomes; remember the airplane that crashed into the house in Gearhart?

That is not all they do! Car wrecks. I can't imagine what it would be like to pull up to a car accident, and see it is somebody you know, or even if it was someone out of town, and they are in life-threatening shape, and needing medical aid.

They have the tools to help you, whether it is medical, or they are cutting you out of your car with the Jaws of Life. Somebody fell down, stroke, broken bones, etc. I am only touching the surface on all that they do.

Remember they were out in force during the big storm we had, helping clear trees and checking on people.

They come to your house at any time of the day or night when you are in need. Even if you can't change the battery in your fire alarm, and need help.

Support your firefighters wherever you are.

If you are a volunteer firefighter, then all you get is a small stipend for all that you do. Even though you put in hours and hours of training for your certificates.

Kudos to all of our volunteer and paid fire departments! I don't want to be a firefighter!

THOMAS THIES
Gearhart

Close to the center

As a resident of Gearhart, and sometime business owner, for 27 years, I value and appreciate all that our volunteer fire department and small police department do for the city. I don't know anyone who doesn't appreciate them.

I believe a new fire station with space for the police department is needed. We rely on them for public safety and security. Because they so often respond to emergencies when seconds count, it seems obvious that a central location is essential.

The current plan is to move these departments to a location that is about 2 miles from the center of town. Voters are assured response time will be only 90 seconds longer. That may be true, though on a summer weekend it seems U.S. Highway 101 and city streets might lead to slower response. Houses south of the current fire station will see slower response, for sure.

Volunteer response time isn't being discussed, but the fire station will be further away for some of those who drive equipment to the fire or medical emergency. The generosity of the contributors of land for a new fire station should be appreciated, but public safety needs to be close to the center of the city served, not in the most remote part of town.

Please vote "no" on the \$14.5 million bond.

JAMES C. CASTERLINE
Gearhart

Front-row seat

As mayors of Gearhart, we've had a front-row seat toward the goal of a new fire station. In 2006, Mayor Kent Smith put a \$3.75 million bond measure on the ballot for a fire station and City Hall. It failed by 96 votes.

Since then, much has been learned about the Cascadia Subduction Zone, the potential for earthquakes and tsunamis, and the need to improve resiliency. In 2015, Mayor Dianne Widdop formed a citizens' fire station committee. They evaluated nine sites and recommended Dunes Meadow Park.

A community survey asked the public to choose a site: the current location, the park and 13th Street and N. Marion Avenue (Highpoint). From the results, Mayor Matt Brown and the City Council eliminated the park as a location. Highpoint was the first choice.

In early 2021, the Highpoint owners withdrew their offer to sell. Later in 2021, Mayor Paulina Cockrum and the City Council were offered land at one of the original locations studied, near Highlands Lane.

In exchange for about 5 acres for a fire and police station and a park, the property owners requested annexation of this property into the city. At 70 feet, the proposed site is on some of the highest ground in the area.

The time is now. If we wait, this facility will cost more. Worse, it will cost more if we experience a disaster and relief efforts are compromised!

PAULINA COCKRUM
MATT BROWN
DIANNE WIDDOP
KENT SMITH
Gearhart

Belongs in downtown

The issue of a new fire station in Gearhart, to me, is about location. I totally agree with the volunteers, there needs to be a new seismic safe building, built to modern engineering standards. But the location should be downtown, where it has always served as the hub of the town.

We taxpayers do not need to pay for a mega station and training facility. There are ample training options to be shared in this county, as has always been the case.

The reality of a major seismic event in this area is catastrophic. The roads will buckle, mass flooding, no power or water, no natural gas to run generators and no cell service, just to name a few of the problems. If the volunteers can even get to the new proposed location, there will be no way of dispatching equipment.

If the taxpayers are paying for this bond measure, and no government grants have been secured, then let's put the new station in the heart of Gearhart. If the city administrator and the volunteers' goal is to have housing for a paid department by asking for a mega station, they should be upfront with their intentions, and we can have a discussion about that issue.

Regardless, the new fire station belongs downtown.

PRESTON DEVEREAUX
Retired Gearhart fire chief and
volunteer

Cloud of public division

After years of debate, Gearhart's proposed fire bond measure will soon conclude under a cloud of public division and poorly constructed messaging designed to mislead the average voter.

Of all the misinformation foisted upon our residents, along with costly items purposely omitted, it is the matter of taxes, which is the most egregious.

Our city promoters have dedicated much effort to convince us the proposed fire megaplex has a minimal tax impact, and have gone so far as to project actual tax levies. However, they can't and shouldn't project taxes.

For the city to illustrate taxes, they must treat the \$14.5 million bond as the final cost, which is semi-fraudulent, since the requested funding is based on estimated costs only. The city has no firm bids or contractual agreements in place, leaving the entire project subject to substantial cost overruns and tax levels much higher than the city's current projections.

In addition, the city promoters have conveniently refused to provide a projected operating budget for the proposed facility, nor have they identified the level of required full-time staffing, all leading to increased cost pressures on Gearhart's existing general fund, which will certainly lead to an additional layer of taxes up and above the proposed bond levy.

An honest process would disclose the impracticality of projecting taxes on loose cost estimates, and would offer Gearhart full disclosures of the projected, and ongoing, impact of increased operating costs, and the additional increase in operating taxation.

Vote "no!"

JACK ZIMMERMAN
Gearhart

Time is money

We have more than enough factual data to base our vote on Measure 4-213. The impact of delay is fiscal irresponsibility. Review the Bond Scenario Calculator on the city of Gearhart's website. As you can see, time is money.

The city has been at the forefront of keeping our community livable and safe. We are fortunate dedicated volunteers have committed to enriching our community. We do not need to abandon our emotion and humanity.

Vote with your head and your heart.
Vote "yes."

WILSON MARK
Gearhart

Preapproval

Most people are familiar with borrowing money to buy a car or home. Before shopping, many of us go to a bank to get preapproved to find out how much we can borrow. Are we required to spend the full amount we are approved for? No.

The city of Gearhart is required to get voter approval to take on large debt. Does voting yes on Measure 4-213 automatically create \$14.5 million in debt? No. The ballot measure is essentially a preapproval from the voters, which allows the city to borrow up to a maximum of \$14.5 million.

Once the city has voter approval, it can borrow by issuing a single bond, or by issuing multiple bonds of different amounts, up to the maximum approved amount.

Your "yes" vote allows us to move forward on this vital project for the benefit of our first responders and our whole community. Without this funding, we cannot pursue the next steps in the process, like getting architectural plans and specifications, which are necessary before we can get competitive bids from construction firms.

The approval of the ballot measure also allows us to clearly demonstrate the community's support for the project, which better enables us to pursue grants and donations, reducing the need for bond financing.

Vote "yes." Support our first responders.

BRENT WARREN
Gearhart City Councilor

'Yes we can'

Together we can: Gearhart has always been a "yes we can" kind of place. In the 1950s, the citizens realized they needed a fire station. Volunteers came together and built a simple fire station with unreinforced cinder block and mortar made with beach sand.

The fire station still stands today, but sadly, after 64 years, it is aging badly, won't survive a moderate earthquake, and is inadequate for our modern needs. Working together, citizens have tackled the problem and now have an excellent plan for a new, updated fire and police station in a more resilient location.

But some people are trying to divide us, to distract us with misinformation and to keep us from our purpose of a safer and more resilient community now, and for the future.

Gearhart knows how to come together for each other. Join me in voting "yes" on Measure 4-213.

BEBE MICHEL
Gearhart

Good reasons

For good reasons, the city of Gearhart asks voters for a "yes" vote on Measure 4-213, a bond for a resilient fire and police station.

The highly dedicated and well-trained men and women of the Gearhart Volunteer Fire Department responded to more than 660 emergency calls last year in their service to our community. Most citizens would agree that citizens' safety and property are the top priorities of the local government.

I know the firefighters' conditions they operate in, and have talked to the firefighters about the struggles they endure every day.

Please vote "yes" for the bond that will replace a below-standard and non-code compliant station and build a resilient facility. I clearly understand that this request does not come from what is wanted, but rather a need for our community.

The city has spent decades reviewing the information, consulting with the experts, and making the best choice now available given the previous compromises.

Passage of this bond will allow the fire and police departments to have a facility to operate at a level of safety for the foreseeable future.

A vote "yes" on the ballot measure equals 84 cents per day, or an additional \$307 annually on my home. Indeed, just pennies per day for the future safety of my hometown.

DENISE FAIRWEATHER
Gearhart

Quite offensive

As a resident of Gearhart, I want to clearly state that I respect and support our fire and rescue workers, as well as our police. I am thankful for the work they do, and the service they provide. My husband was a public servant before he retired, and I know firsthand of his dedication to the public needs, often working in bad weather and late into the night.

I read the recent article "Voters in Gearhart to decide on new firehouse" (The Astorian, April 19). As a resident, I found the remarks by our newest mayor to be quite offensive. She refers to her career as a caregiver, stating that people who work to serve others are subject to "harassment and bullying," and goes on to say that the "discourse (I guess she means community discussion, but doesn't make that clear) is still bullying, downright uncivil behavior..." The "bullying" seems to me to be coming from the mayor's office.

Residents have tried to explain to the mayor and other city employees that a "no" vote for the \$14.5 million bond does not imply a lack of support for the fire and police who serve the community. A "no" vote is a clear statement that the residents believe the bond request is excessive, and the proposed location inappropriate.

It is clearly understood that upgrades should be made to the current fire station. A reasonably designed station in a location appropriate for the people who would be paying for it would certainly be supported by the community.

DOROTHY BAKER
Gearhart

Nostalgia doesn't save lives

As anyone who has been at the coast for a number of years can attest, Gearhart has changed. The entire northwest coast has changed.

Families are moving here from other locations far and wide, bringing a new richness to the area. Traffic is heavier, the population is growing, services are strained from demand and the number of calls received by our selfless police officers and volunteer firefighters continues to increase.

Change is unavoidable in life. There's an old saying that, "If you don't change, you die." People are constantly adapting, growing and evolving how they view the world. Nostalgia is a wonderful thing. It offers comfort, warm memories and familiarity. But nostalgia doesn't save lives.

Acknowledging that we're a growing community with complex needs, particularly in regard to keeping our community and citizens safe, is critical. Our emergency response volunteers deserve updated, adequate tools to perform their lifesaving duties.

The location of that facility and equipment must be in an area that is secure, in order to keep us all safe and revive the community in the event of a disaster.

The current station isn't going away. Its nostalgia and place in the community will remain. There's a unique opportunity to make its function different, but meaningful to the community it has served so well for 60 years. It has done its job.

It's time for the Gearhart Volunteer Fire Department to have access to 21st-century facilities on high ground. Vote "yes" on Measure 4-213.

LISA CERVENY
Gearhart

Outdated and inadequate

Honestly respect the right of those folks who say "no" to the Gearhart resiliency station bond measure. But why vote "no?"

Maybe they're stuck on the blueprint concept. The plan is designed to attract and maintain certified firefighting volunteers, not a paid team.

Is it really an overwhelming footprint vision for this growing town? Is the cost of the bond the real reason for shouting "no?" Or is it the powerful nostalgic heart tug of that old cinder block green engine garage?

Sorry, but it is outdated and inadequate in every respect. One small bathroom. They make coffee and clean up their toxic gear in the same stained sink. There's no exhaust system to clear engine fumes.

Understandably, change is hard. But let's get smart and rip off the Band-Aid. A new higher ground home for our fire and police is critically important to provide the civic services we all demand and depend on.

Gearhart is unbelievably blessed to have 27 volunteer firefighters. Our volunteers are professional in every way, and there for us 24/7/365. Please give them the respect they give us with your "yes" vote.

The beautiful Gearhart Volunteer Fire Department traditions are here to stay. Neon engines will still lead the Fourth of July parade, there's still going to be an Easter egg hunt and a giant Christmas tree lighting Pacific Way.

VICKIE ABRAHAMSON
Gearhart

A critical juncture

Early Clatsop native people created the Ridge Path in Gearhart. Marshall Kinney, who platted the town, incorporated it into the town plan in 1890 for future generations to enjoy.

This brings me to reflect on the future of our new fire station. We are about to vote on something that is more important than first meets the eye. We are attempting to create a safety net to protect and help future generations, not only for the town of Gearhart, but also for the surrounding area.

I find such hope and reassurance in the positive energy and dedication that the firehouse committee and City Council have shown to make this a reality. It has been at least 16 years in the planning.

Now that we've reached a critical juncture in this process, let's not forget that there is a lot of power in positive energy, coupled with intent. Thank you.

DIANE SPEAKMAN
Gearhart