

**BREWERY from page 1A**

“The brewery would be prominent,” Yecny explained. “We would make sure you could see tanks. We would give tours. And it would be a gathering place.”

Instead of housing the entire venture in the blue building, there could be an additional building constructed near the boardwalk, on the grassy area at the east end.

In this scenario, the blue building would work mainly as manufacturing and storage facility, along with a possible bakery and distilling company. The new boardwalk building would then act as the restaurant and community gathering place.

Along with a brewpub, Boathouse Brewing is also entertaining the creation of a kiosk where tourists and locals could sign up for recreational activities such as fishing and clamming trips.

“We like the idea of two sites, and there’s probably some really good advantages to being on the boardwalk,” Yecny said. “The parking, the distance from the water. The blue building has advantages as a manufacturing site, a low-cost warehouse building.”

Yecny said he believed that the new company would benefit the community and fit within urban renewal in a number of ways, the most important being the bolstering of employment and tourism.

“A brewery is a manufacturing process,” he said. “This would have, not only our normal restaurant type jobs, but a couple of manufacturing jobs that are built in with the brewers.”

The company plans to create seven to 10 full-time equivalent positions in the community.

Because the brewery would be a local attraction, various other stores in the community, in particular the Bay Street area, would be bolstered, the representatives told FURA. It could attract recreational boaters looking to moor close to a destination pub.

Thompson projected that the brewpub would have a positive impact on property values in the neighborhood, and the business itself would bring in additional tax revenue.

Boathouse Brewing would also be preserving the blue

building, as well as spurring on new construction for the boardwalk structure.

“What we’re establishing is a vibrant marina hub that will enhance the campground area and the neighborhood around there,” Thompson said. “It will anchor Bay Street on the east end, as to pull out the whole feel of Bay Street and Old Town. ...

“The city is in motion, and we want to be a part of that.”

While the representatives of the brewery are enthusiastic about the riverfront property, they are aware of possible controversies, in particular partially obstructing the river view with the boardwalk pub.

“The current footprint on the [boardwalk] plan is 1,800 square feet,” Thompson said. “We’d need a little bit more than that, maybe 3,000. We want to keep the footprint fairly small because we understand there is a community desire to keep most of that viewshed open.”

They would also look to ensure the architecture would fit the feel and history of Old Town.

A second issue would be the noise associated with the two buildings, which may be of particular concern to residents of the condo building that would rest in the center of the two sites.

“It’s going to be a neighborhood site, so we want to be neighborhood friendly,” Yecny said. “I think hours that we open and close would be something we could take into account for the neighborhood as well.”

Thompson added, “We also have to address odor. In the process, you’re using a lot of hops and yeast. Those are all issues that we’ll have to address and do it positively. This needs to be a positive development for this community.”

If the riverfront properties prove unfeasible, the company is also exploring the vacant lot across the street from the Florence Events Center (FEC), which is currently owned by FURA.

“We don’t really know much about the site,” Yecny said. “But



PHOTOS BY JARED ANDERSON/SIUSLAW NEWS

**The blue building on Port of Siuslaw property on Harbor Street is currently leased to Boathouse Brewery, which is still looking at ways to convert the space into a working brewery.**



it would be removed from being so close to the river. That would be something we would have to take into account.”

However, the FEC site is not ideal to Boathouse Brewery’s planned aesthetic.

“When you talk about brewpubs, and you talk to people in the industry, they talk about the experience, because there are so many beers,” Thompson said. “We picked this area because we believe in the connection to the river. We don’t think we’re a beach community. Our economy has been based on that for decades. Granted, timber and fishing are not what we’re built on here economically now, but it’s our history and heritage is important. With the Native Americans before us, the river was the highway, so we believe in the connection to the river.”

The idea for the brewery first began in 1994, with the expectation that it would become a microbrewery, with heavy manufacturing leading to statewide distribution.

The site plan was similar to the company’s current plan, located on the boardwalk, but the vision stalled when con-

struction on the boardwalk drug out. Thompson added that the company partners were all in mid-career, and it was a significant investment.

After the concept was put on hold, the microbrewery business exploded across Oregon, and the market became saturated.

“There are so many tap handles out there that people are fighting for. There’s a proliferation of microbrewing,” Thompson said. “Looking back, it was the right model. We would be in a good place right now if we had gone forward with that.”

Instead, the company is focusing on a brewpub, which still makes its brew on site but focuses on selling through a local restaurant.

The brew will also be shipped outside of Florence, focusing on distribution up and down the coast, down to Coos Bay, up to Yachats and into Eugene.

“But that’s going to be mostly marketing and promotional,” Yecny said. “It’s not going to be for profit, but more for recognition.”

However, this is not to say that statewide distribution is totally ruled out.

“If at any point in time, if we could compete as a regional brewing company, we would look at expansion,” Thompson said. “Right now, we’re looking to identify and craft brews in the community. Kind of an experience, a meeting place.”

The company is currently made up of three individuals: Thompson, owner of Coast Radio in Florence and vice-chair on the board of Oregon Pacific Bank (OPB); Yecny, former CEO of PeaceHealth Peace Harbor and board member of OPB; and Bob Serra, current publisher of Maple Creek Press and former publisher of the Central Coast Connection.

The company has additional partners who have already made capital pledges of \$300,000 for the project, including investors who have worked in the brewing industry.

However, Boathouse Brewery has not identified an actual brewer, so the types of brews

created have yet to be determined.

“I think probably the biggest element we have yet to identify is the ‘super hospitality person,’” Thompson said. “We need to bring in the right person that would manage the place in conjunction with the brewer. We think hospitality is all part of the experience.”

Boathouse applied for the FURA grant because the partners already made a considerable investment in the project, working closely with the Port of Siuslaw for the past eight months.

“We’ve had negotiations with the port on the lease of the building, and we’ve kept them updated on the changing directions we have gone,” Thompson said. “We asked them to keep an open mind, and they have agreed to do so. We’re working closely with them.”

Boathouse is currently leasing the Port’s blue building, reserving it as they decide on moving ahead with the project.

“The three of us have put in \$25,000 already,” Thompson explained. “We’re looking at a lot of discovery and a lot of costs in nailing down exactly what it will cost to do this. We needed some financial help to move forward. We’re more than happy to put in the money we put in for due diligence, but at some point, you’ve got to draw the line at how much money you put in to what could be just a dream.”

The FURA grant will be used to look at infrastructure costs, an analysis for electrical, propane and sanitary sewer replacement and design development assistance.

If Boathouse Brewery does decide to go ahead with the project, the timeline for construction is still fluid.

“We’ve adjusted multiple timelines,” Thompson said. “Right now, we’ve got it planned out to begin construction a year from now. I think we’ve got a pretty good handle for things to fall in place. Until we know specifically what can be done, it’s still a moving target.”

**Christian Church to hold ‘Shipwrecked’ VBS**

The Florence Christian Church, located at Second and Ivy streets, is inviting children ages 4 years old through fifth grade, to “Shipwrecked: Vacation Bible School.”

The week-long event will take place Aug. 6 to 10, from 9 a.m. to noon each day.

Kids will participate in memorable Bible adventures, games and hands-on science-related fun.

They will also be challenged to collect pocket change to help support the local Backpack for Kids program in Florence.

To register, call the church office at 541-997-2961 or visit [www.florencechurch.com](http://www.florencechurch.com) and click on the VBS link.

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