

Cottage Grove Est. 1889 Sentinel



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WEATHER

 Mostly cloudy with a high of 51 and a low tonight of 38
 Full forecast on A5

COLUMNIST

 Mary Ellen
 Pet Tips 'n' Tales
 A5

SPORTS & REC

 Basketball returns for Creswell, CG
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Residents petition for better downtown access

BY DAMIEN SHERWOOD
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Rayme Epperson wants to see some changes downtown and has gathered 106 signatures to back her up. Epperson, owner of downtown business Salon Five14, said she has witnessed a significant portion of her mobility-impaired clientele hindered by a lack of accessibility. Though she tried to reserve parking in front of her Main Street business for these clientele, she was told by the City of Cottage Grove it was not allowed.

So, with dozens of names on an informal petition in hand, Epperson proposed to the city that ADA (Americans with Disability Act) parking be constructed downtown, though she has also said she would settle for anything that improved accessibility for those who

are mobility-challenged. "It would be nice to have some kind of concrete ramp or semi-circle to eliminate that giant step up on the curb — not a blockade like in front of the eateries that are supposed to be removed for winter," she said, referring to the "streeteries" installed in downtown parking spaces this year.

However, Epperson said the city's response to her parking space request has been an uncompromising rejection.

Several city staff have told *The Sentinel*, too, that meeting ADA standards for a parking space in particular would be difficult or impossible on Main Street simply because of space requirements.

"Physically, there's just no way we could take that one spot and build a space," said Public Works and Development Director Faye Stewart, referring to ADA parking. "Just the physical constraints that we have to deal with and

the rules around ADA parking spaces. I've been told it's impossible to build something there site-specific under the conditions we have today."

One reason for the physical constraints is the slope of Main Street itself, which has a noticeably high crown at its center. Curbs downtown are notoriously high as well, which is both a hindrance for the mobility-impaired and engineers seeking solutions.

"But in a rebuild job, it might be something that could be considered," Stewart added.

Several locals have testified to the need for that consideration to take place.

Resident Fonda Norris said she is "moderately handicapped," and uses a walker or wheelchair for safety purposes when she is out and about.

"I very rarely go to downtown Cottage Grove because of accessibility," she said. "[There is] not nearly enough handicapped parking and if



DAMIEN SHERWOOD/COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL

Downtown curbs on Main Street can be prohibitively high for some residents with mobility issues.

there is a spot available, it is usually too far from where I need to go, so then I need to use the handicapped corners or try to get up on a curb."

She also said the corners

themselves are hard to use because they are not aligned properly with the sidewalks.

"If I am in a wheelchair

See **PARKING 3A**

Farmers market makes winter stand



DAMIEN SHERWOOD/COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL

The South Valley Farmers Market held one of its winter events on Nov. 20 at the Covered Bridge Brewing Group. The next (and last) winter market of the season will be held Dec. 11 at the same location from 11 – 3 p.m. (See A6 for the full story.)

CG to receive bridge beams

BY DAMIEN SHERWOOD
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After rounding the new year, Cottage Grove is due to collect 11 free bridge beams from the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT).

"We're excited by that in multiple ways," said City Manager Richard Meyers on KNND's Beeper Show on Monday.

The 115-foot-long beams will be used for the city's upcoming Cleveland Bridge project, though there is still not a date set for the project to begin.

"We don't know when we're going to be building this," said Meyers. "It could be next year. It could be three or five or 10 years, but ODOT needs to get these beams that they use for the temporary structures off the property that they're stored on right now."

The beams were used for the I-5 bridge crossing of the Willamette River between Springfield and Eugene. There are reportedly hundreds of these beams ready to be given away.

Cottage Grove city engineers evaluated the beams and confirmed that they would work perfectly for the city's planned project. They can also be stored for long periods without corrosion.

"So it's a huge, huge advantage for us to get these. And they're free," said Meyers, estimating that the beams would normally

See **BEAMS 3A**

Planning Commission rejects zone change recommendation to city council

BY DAMIEN SHERWOOD
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In a rare move, the Cottage Grove Planning Commission last Wednesday (Nov. 10) voted against a city staff recommendation that the commission recommend a zone change request to city council.

An application from landowner Don Nordin to rezone land at 1142 Chestnut Ave. from R1 to RC (Residential Commercial) prompted public discussion at the planning commission meeting and concerned some in the neighborhood.

It was ultimately determined through the discus-

sion that Nordin's housing plans could move forward without the zone change.

"I think we would rather ensure it comes back so we have community input, especially since it doesn't preclude him from doing what he says he wants to do," said Commissioner Darby Valley regarding the decision to vote against the recommendation.

Valley also referenced a zone change of the old Harrison Elementary School from R1 to R2 passing through the commission with little resistance in 2019. In that case, the land ended up not being used in the way the commission expected it to, he said.

Nordin laid out a unique

plan for his land for the commission.

"In response to a community need for more affordable housing and at the direction of HB 2001 from our legislature to address the need for 'middle housing,' I am requesting a change from the R1 zoning on my property ... to RC residential commercial to allow for a phased construction of a duplex and cottage cluster with an associated opportunity space, utility shed, and great room," stated Nordin in his request to the commission.

The property abuts another property across L Street that is already zoned RC and is across Chest-

nut Avenue from another property that is zoned R2. City staff determined that the rezoning of Nordin's land to RC would be consistent with other zoning in the neighborhood.

Nordin's plan involves making residential space for "perhaps 12 or 14 individuals" rather than housing just the land's single occupant.

Using a co-housing model, Nordin proposes encouraging an ownership stake in the property with holders given the ability to sell that stake.

The plan also proposes construction with a net-zero energy approach,

See **ZONE 3A**

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