

Erosion problem at Breakers Point

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The association plans to appeal the decision to the City Council at its March 3 meeting, Francis said.

“We are still being patient, hoping that we will get the go-ahead to put sand there.”

Nonetheless, the city’s municipal code allows property owners to place riprap without a permit “to protect buildings from imminent threat.”

“From the city’s point of view, if there’s an emergency, don’t wait for us. Go do what you need to do,” City Planner Mark Barnes said.

In fact, ever since the erosion had brought the estuary bank within 25 feet of the building, Breakers Point has had the legal right to go that route.

“That’s within the law, and if we see our property’s being compromised, we will take that action,” Francis said.

The association would have to notify the city, the Oregon Division of State Lands and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The association may also have to alter or remove the riprap to conform to city and state standards.

For now, though, “we’re trying to work with City Hall. That’s the bottom line,” Francis added.

If the council upholds the planning commission’s denial, Breakers Point may take the case to the state Land Use Board of Appeals, he said. Another possibility is that the council will direct Breakers Point to modify its request, perhaps allowing the homeowners association to dump, say, 5,000 rather than 7,000 cubic yards onto the bank.

“It’s all up to what kind of motions they craft,” he said.

No other options?

For the past 30 years, the homeowners association has dealt with the erosion by intermittently packing up to 50 cubic yards of sand onto the bank, sometimes doing it half a dozen times a year, Francis said. The sand — harvested from the lawns, gardens, walkways, patios and elsewhere in and around the complex — would get washed out into the sedimentation system and renourish the beach.

“That’s the beauty of the situation,” he said. “You are returning it to the system, and you will maintain the stability of the bank.”

Later on, the association and the city got a joint permit from the Division of State Lands to place up to 7,000 cubic yards of sand on the



ERICK BENDEL PHOTO

Sand continues to fall away from Breakers Point Building 45, threatening the possibility that the building could begin to slip into the Ecola Creek Estuary.

bank. In 2009-10 Breakers Point ended up putting a total of 4,500 cubic yards there.

No sand has been placed there since, however. In the past five years, erosion — aided by humans, animals, storms and the creek itself — has reshaped the estuary.

“Whenever we go out there it’s never the same,” said Carol Keljo, who owns unit 451 in Building No. 45 with her husband, Tom Keljo.

In 2014, the city didn’t renew its joint permit with Breakers Point, which is why the homeowners association included the estuary stabilization as part of its dune grading plan.

The erosion has reached a point where sand and riprap may be the only remedies, Francis said.

“Riprap is the last choice in how you deal with that problem,” Barnes said, adding that “it’s not something you do rashly. The presumption is that you don’t have other options.”

‘Futile and disruptive’

The use of riprap is a notoriously divisive issue.

On one hand, it’s a permanent armored structure that protects waterfront buildings from the effects of erosion, Barnes said. Once the riprap is installed, “you don’t have to worry about (the) sand-bank caving away under your porch anymore,” he said.

On the other hand, “if you look elsewhere on the Oregon Coast where this has been done, you often get erosion at the ends of riprap projects, upstream or downstream,” Barnes said. “There’s some real hydraulic and erosion effects of riprap that are poorly understood and difficult to predict.”

Since riprap is a hard



ERICK BENDEL PHOTO

Gas lines beneath Building 45, marked by yellow flags, may soon be exposed as the Ecola Creek Estuary continues to erode.

surface, it can strongly accelerate or deflect a stream’s current, said Jerome Arnold, vice chairman of the Ecola Creek Watershed Council.

Waves that bounce off riprap “travel upstream with considerably more force” than those that hit piles of sand, he said.

There can also be environmental drawbacks. Habitat that might have supported birds and small mammals gets eliminated, Barnes said.

Riprap has an aesthetic impact as well. The embankment “no longer looks like a natural sand bank. It just looks like a pile of gray rocks,” he said.

However, Frances said Breakers Point plans to regularly push sand over the riprap, both to maintain the sand bank “look” and to return sand to the beach. “That would be my preference,” he said.

“I’m against putting both sand and riprap in there. I was against them building the condominiums in the first place,” said Arnold, speaking for himself rather than the watershed council. “Eventually, they’re going to lose.

The ocean puts to shame all the things that humans can throw against it. It’s kind of futile and disruptive.”

‘Biding our time’

The Keljos, who also live in Vancouver, Wash., are delighted that Breakers Point may end up putting riprap along the bank, Carol Keljo said.

“My thought was that the riprap will be much more secure. The waves won’t be washing it out. The kids won’t be playing on it. I kind of doubt the elk will be coming up that way,” she said. “I think it makes a lot more sense.”

They both feel that riprap is a better, long-term solution to the erosion of their property than the dumping of sand, which can only be a temporary fix to a never-ending problem.

The homeowners association hasn’t submitted the paperwork to officially appeal the planning commission’s denial to the City Council, but it will soon, Francis said.

“We are still biding our time, which is running out rapidly,” he said. “The erosion is not stopping.”

Seaside Scholarships reaches its \$50,000 goal

At first, the task seemed daunting: An anonymous donor had offered Seaside Scholarships Inc. \$50,000, and the nonprofit organization wanted to raise another \$50,000 by Jan. 15.

When it came up a few thousand dollars short of its \$50,000 fundraising goal, the deadline was extended by two weeks.

“We were thinking that there are people that don’t do anything until the last minute,” said Seaside Scholarships President Celine McEwan.

They were right.

As January came to a close, the nonprofit organization was able to exceed its goal, raising over \$51,000. The funds will be added to the donor’s \$50,000 contribution.

“This person thought enough of higher education that it was an impetus for us to go to Seaside and ask: ‘Can we do this too?’” said McEwan.

With more than 100 individual donations — and the help of a few extra days — Seaside answered in the affirmative.

Now, with a bank account balance sporting more zeros than ever before, Seaside Scholarships Inc. is entering a new phase.

“We have to decide which percentage of what to keep to build the fund and what to give away,” she said. “Now we have to be concerned with building a future for Seaside Scholarships.”

Indeed, it’s a new world.

“Last year we didn’t have these concerns because we didn’t have any money,” said McEwan. The group is looking at the Astoria High School Scholarships fund as a potential model.

“The next step is to create an endowment,” she added. “We have to decide where we invest so that Seaside Scholarships will be going on for the next 100 years.”

Workshop will teach how to create business forms

A class on Microsoft Word for businesses, level two is planned Feb. 17.

Instructor Jane Francis will show students how to create business forms with efficient options for data entry and how to use styles to make editing and formatting easier.

The class will run from 8:30 to 10 a.m. Feb. 17 in the South County campus of Clatsop Community College, 1455 N. Roosevelt Drive. It also will be taught that day from 5:30 to 7:30

p.m. in Towler Hall, room 105 at the Astoria campus.

Participants can bring their own laptops or use the classroom computers (with Word 2013). Sample documents will be distributed to use in class and practice with at home.

Pre-registration is required, and space is limited.

To register, email SBDC@clatsopcc.edu for a registration link or call 503-338-2402. Cost is \$15 per workshop (payable at class by check or credit card).

Social Security workshop set

A workshop to help potential retirees learn about Social Security and maximize retirement income is set for March 3.

The workshop will begin at 6 p.m. in the South County center of Clatsop Community College, 1455

N. Roosevelt Drive, Seaside.

It will cover several topics, including: when to apply for benefits, how to estimate benefits, how to minimize taxes on Social Security benefits and how to coordinate Social Security with other sources of retirement income.

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