

CANNON BEACH GAZETTE



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Council seeks grant for pedestrian safety bridge

Pedestrian bridge provides safety, lower cost, officials say

By Dani Palmer
Cannon Beach Gazette

Trying to ensure residents and visitors survive the “Big One” that could

strike at any time, the Cannon Beach City Council voted Tuesday night to pursue a Connect Oregon VI grant for a new pedestrian bridge over Ecola Creek.

The city’s current evacuation plan directs pedestrians south because of the likelihood of a bridge collapse over the creek. Public Works Director Dan Grassick said the Fir Street bridge is “woefully inadequate”

when it comes to seismic and resulting tsunami activity. From downtown, where many shop, the trip south to high ground is a longer route that could waste precious time.

“The creek is a physical barrier that will cause a lot of deaths if you don’t have some way to cross it,” Grassick said. “Scores of people will lose their lives trying to escape the tsunami.”

The Emergency Preparedness Committee developed options and asked permission to seek the grant in the amount of \$1.8 million. If awarded under Connect Oregon’s multimodal transportation funding program, the city will have to provide a 30 percent match.

Officials set aside \$100,000 from the roads repair and replacement fund in 2013 to build a new bridge.

If Cannon Beach receives the grant, Grassick suggested the city use OBEC Engineering Consultants to build upon its 2011 bridge study and help select the specific design and location. The Emergency Preparedness Committee closely examined locations near Fir Street and NeCus’ Park.

Grassick said the pedestrian bridge would have to be no less than 30 feet away

from the traffic bridge, 10-foot wide to accommodate the mass of people who would cross it and would likely be built with 100-foot-deep piling filled with concrete to withstand sand liquefaction.

Mayor Sam Steidel and Councilor George Vetter asked about replacing or retrofitting the current bridge.

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‘WHOSE MOVE’



DANI PALMER/CANNON BEACH GAZETTE

Steidel releases his first children’s book From a family of teachers, out pops an artist

By Dani Palmer
Cannon Beach Gazette

The bell overhead chimes as a woman in a yellow raincoat steps inside Steidel’s Art, a smile on her face as she tells her friend “You have to see this. I’ve bought some of his pieces. I love them.”

Bill Steidel is well-known for his art, but that isn’t all he does. Culminating a decades-long work in progress, Steidel released his first published children’s book this fall titled “Whose Move.”

The book is a story about a boy and dragon, accompanied and enhanced by Steidel’s illustrations.

“The stories have been around for years and years,” he said.

Steidel, 88, has drawn since he was in elementary school. His third-grade teacher would let him in class, where he’d focus on fairy tale themes. A junior high teacher encouraged him to enter contests he won consecutive years and went on to encourage him to go to college for art, which he did at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn.

His parents were academicians. Many in his family, including siblings, became educators.

“All of a sudden out pops a child that doesn’t want to do anything but draw pictures,” he said. “They told me they didn’t know what to do with me.”

But they “backed me up” when he chose a different path.

After college, he illustrated his first book with Simon and Schuster. Eventually, with “itchy feet,” he ended up out west for the long-haul, including a short stint at Disney, and used his GI Bill to go back to school.

He was “scared to death” of his English course. It wasn’t his strong subject in high school. His first assignment was a composition. With encouragement from his wife, he used his art with words to tell the tale. The spelling was atrocious, his teacher told him, but the story was good.

He used his storytelling skills to calm a bus full of unruly children during his time as a bus driver. He’d tried songs first and got the kids singing along, but received complaints from parents about the noise.

Then he began telling the stories. He told one that stretched on and on with cliff-hangers. It lasted eight months and enthralled the youth.

“Everything leads up to this book,” he said.

Steidel dedicated his book to those who waited for it.

“Whose Move” is about an orphan named Timothy who lives in a desolate village plagued by a dragon. It comes annually during harvest time and destroys everything.

Eventually the villagers send the orphan out in suit of armor to face the beast. Timothy challenges it to a game of tic-tac-toe that he wins, sending the dragon away.

Every year they play the game, Timothy winning each time, making the village one of the nicest in the kingdom. Then the dragon finally wins.

Readers interested in finding out what happens next can find “Whose Move” at Steidel’s Art, Goodreads, Amazon and Barnes and Noble.

There are a limited 100 hardbacks signed with a special hand drawing inside.

Swedenborg says he’ll serve six months as fire chief

Still few details on former chief Balzer’s departure

By Dani Palmer
Cannon Beach Gazette

The Cannon Beach Rural Fire Protection District Board and Interim Fire Chief Frank Swedenborg agreed the district needs to find a permanent leader sooner rather than later during a special meeting Monday evening.

On Monday, he asked the board for direction. “I just need to find out what’s crucial, what has to happen,” he said. “My biggest concern is the betterment of the fire department and the firefighters.”

Former chief Mike Balzer was relieved of his duties in mid-October because of ongoing personnel issues, according to Board President Sharon Clyde.

At Monday’s special meeting, Swedenborg said he is willing to fill in as chief until March. There was discussion of bringing in an outside interim chief, perhaps a retired fire chief, to give the board more time to find a permanent leader, but Swedenborg said the department feels the instability of a second interim wouldn’t be for the best. “We don’t feel that’s the correct option,” he said. “I think that just mixes the pot for the firefighters.”

The owner of The Waves in Cannon Beach has served as Cannon Beach’s assistant fire chief for 18 years and as a volunteer firefighter for roughly 35.

“I felt it’s important to be a part of the community you live in and the fire department sounded like a good area,” Swedenborg said. “It was just a good fit for me.”

While Swedenborg said he enjoyed the camaraderie of the department, he is ready to retire and not looking to fill in permanently for the fire district. He now works three to four hours per day four days a week. Captain Matt Gardner has stepped up to help in daily operations.

The Cannon Beach Rural Fire Protection District provides firefighting and emergency service to the North Coast communities of Cannon Beach, Arch Cape and Falcon Cove.

The fire chief also serves on the Emergency Preparedness Committee. Either Swedenborg or Gardner will take Balzer’s place on the committee on a temporary basis.

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You can look all you want, but please don’t climb the rock

Some visitors just can’t stifle the urge

By Dani Palmer
Cannon Beach Gazette

Haystack Rock is an iconic symbol of Cannon Beach that draws thousands to the small coastal town each year. But members of the Haystack Rock Awareness Program want the public to know the 235-foot-tall rock — protected as an Oregon Islands National Wildlife Refuge and Marine Garden — is more for looking than for touching.

Haystack Rock is what drew Jason Phelps, 35, of Vancouver, B.C., and his girlfriend, Abbey, to Cannon Beach during a trip to Oregon.

“We’ve seen tons of photos and had to stop by to see it for ourselves,” Phelps said. “She’s a big fan of ‘The Goonies,’ too, so that’s a plus.”



DANI PALMER/CANNON BEACH GAZETTE

Children play alongside Haystack Rock, where a sign permitting visitors from entering its protected areas stands.

Like Phelps, visitors come for that adventure; others are there for wedding or senior pictures. But a few just can’t resist an urge to reach out and touch, or even climb.

“Sometimes they get tunnel vision,” HRAP Coordinator Melissa Keyser said. “It’s just not an environment they’ve been in before — they want to check it out.”

“A lot of times it’s an honest mistake,” she added, but she also believes people should know the rules of the places they visit.

Even with the presence of program staff, signage and information, the number of people climbing the rock is high, she added.

From February to September, Haystack Rock Awareness Program staff intercepted more than 1,200 people trying to climb the rock. That was just during beach shifts, each a few hours a day.

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