

Cannon Beach wants fire chief on job by June 1

What Cannon Beach is seeking in a new leader

By Lyra Fontaine
Cannon Beach Gazette

A college degree, leadership experience and EMT training are all characteristics sought in a new Cannon Beach fire chief.

Interim fire chief Jim Stearns announced the board would accept applications for a new chief until March 15. Hiring is expected by June 1.

The fire chief would lead fire, water rescue and non-transport EMS services in the 5-square-mile area, including the communities of Cannon Beach, Arch Cape and Falcon Cove. The chief would also be expected to work closely with neighboring fire districts and city, county, state and federal partners.

At the Cannon Beach Rural Fire Protection District Board of Directors meeting Monday night, directors said they were looking for an experienced chief who is actively involved in the community, works well with the board, and displays strong fiscal responsibility.

The chief will lead the paid staff and 26 volunteers with "fairness, honesty and efficiency." Salary for the chief's job is \$67,500 to \$75,000, depending on qualifications.

Candidates are asked to possess at least an associate degree in fire administration, although a bachelor's degree or degree from a federal fire officer program would be considered. A public administration degree is considered a plus, along with experience in a "closely related field or a satisfactory combination of education and experience that demonstrate the ability to perform the fire chief job duties."

Candidates are required to have at least eight years full-time paid experience, with at least five years of supervisory experience in a command position of captain or higher. Emergency medical technician basic training is a prerequisite, although paramedic training is preferred.

The board is seeking to replace former fire chief Mike Balzer, who was discharged in October. Balzer has since filed a lawsuit against the Cannon Beach Rural Fire Protection District claiming wrongful dismissal.

Balzer seeks more than \$525,000 in damages and his reinstatement as fire chief.

Stearns, of Hermiston, has served as interim fire chief since December.

Stearns said he expects there to be about 25 applicants for the fire chief position, with half of those meeting qualifications.

In brief

- The fire district had 21 EMS calls and five fire calls in the past month.

- Stearns praised the community support and volunteers during the search for Haystack Heights resident Raymond Hickman, 87, which was suspended after a five-day search.

- The Fire Corps program — a national initiative to assist local fire departments — continues and is "moving along nicely," Stearns said. They have had drills and exercises. Most of the corps is made up of ex-firefighters and will be ready for their first calls soon.

- With the acquisition of ladder truck 3249, the custom-built, 36-foot-long, 500-hundred-horsepower Pierce Arrow, fire stations in South Carolina and Tennessee have expressed interest in buying the old ladder truck.

Volunteers were trained with the new custom-built truck over the weekend.

Balzer lawsuit, recall effort proceed

Balzer from Page 1A

Documents provided by the Fire District after an open records request include an 2014-15 evaluation of Balzer's performance. Balzer, who earned more than \$100,000 in annual salary and compensation as chief, was said to demonstrate "poor leadership," "poor communication" and "lied" to the board when he agreed to leave the chief's truck on district property and failed to do so, directors said.

"This continues to seriously erode the trust board has for the chief," they wrote.

In addition, remarks by Colleen Balzer on social media exhibited "poor judgment" by Chief Balzer "in allowing his spouse to continue to interact inappropriately online via social media criticizing board members and staff," directors wrote in their evaluation.

In four out of five categories — accuracy, job knowledge, productivity and timeliness — Balzer's work "needed improvement," ac-

'If (Clyde, Smith and Beck-Sweeney) step down, there's no cost. There's that to factor in. Do they want to cost the district more money?'

Susan Neuwirth

ording to the directors' evaluation.

In the fifth category, thoroughness, Balzer received a "satisfactory" rating.

Balzer, who signed off on the evaluation in March, told the board at the time: "After reviewing the contents of this review, I believe it's best to not comment on how things were said and written."

A six-month review was to be held in November. "Failure to achieve the six-month goals may result in termination," directors wrote.

Board recall sought

Balzer was terminated three weeks prior to the six-month review period.

Since that time, many Cannon Beach residents have defended the former chief

and sought his reinstatement.

Resident Susan Neuwirth launched a petition to remove three of the board's five directors, President Sharon Clyde, Garry Smith and Linda Beck-Sweeney, in a recall election.

Neuwirth accused the board of lacking transparency and being "unprofessionally run."

Recall proponents need a required 125 signatures to force a vote, a number determined by taking 15 percent of the votes the district cast in the last election.

As of Friday, Feb. 5, Neuwirth said she had the required number but was seeking at least 150 names in the event some signatures are dismissed on technicalities.

Neuwirth has until April 6

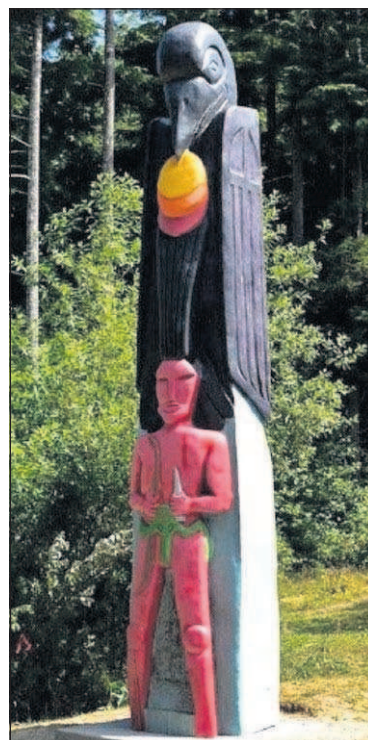
to collect signatures, Clatsop County Clerk Valerie Crafard said.

"We're well within the time period," Neuwirth said. "We're just gleaning people who were out of town and were missed. People are seeking me out."

If an insufficient number of signatures are submitted, it proceeds no farther, Crafard said. "If a sufficient number of signatures are submitted, I inform the public officer that they may submit their resignation or a statement of justification," she said. "If the public officer does not resign within five days, the election must be held no later than the 35th day after the last day for the public officer to resign."

If the three commissioners named in the recall petition choose to fight the ouster, a special election would be held at a cost of about \$6,000 to the taxpayers, Neuwirth said.

"If they step down, there's no cost," she said. "There's that to factor in. Do they want to cost the district more money?"



A totem pole designed by Guy Capoeman. A 10-foot-tall welcoming pole in the figure of a Clatsop tribesman may soon be installed in NeCus' Park.

A TOTEM FOR A TRIBE

Local arts grant to pay for statue of Clatsop tribesman

By Nancy McCarthy
For EO Media Group

A 10-foot tall welcoming pole in the figure of a Clatsop tribesman may soon be installed in NeCus' Park at the former Cannon Beach Elementary School playground.

The city's arts advisory committee has recommended that its annual \$10,000 grant for public art be spent on the statue, to be carved from a cedar pole. Before the pole is formally commissioned, however, it must be approved by the city's design review board, which will consider it in February. City Manager Brant Kucera will have the final say about whether the statue should be purchased.

The arts committee approved the pole, proposed by the city's Palette Group, during a meeting this month.

The pole will be carved by Quinault, Washington, artist Guy Capoeman, who

has carved other poles and canoes. Some of Capoeman's relatives belong to the Clatsop, Nehalem and Tillamook tribes, according to Dick Basch, vice chairman of the Clatsop-Nehalem Tribe.

The statue will depict a member of the NeCus' village extending his arm out in a gesture of welcoming. Palette Group members are suggesting that the pole be placed just west of the picnic table at NeCus' Park in a clearing. The pole would face toward the ocean, as NeCus' village members did when they welcomed fishermen and traders approaching the Clatsop village by dugout canoe on the ocean.

Although the statue would be carved from a cedar log, it would have spots of black, red and blue paint. Members of the public arts committee questioned how intense the colors would be, and Basch, who has been in contact with Capoeman, said he thought they would be created from natural pigment.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Tuesday, Feb. 16
Cannon Beach Public Works, 9 a.m., City Hall 163 E. Gower St.

Seaside School District, 6 p.m., 1801 S. Franklin St.

Thursday, Feb. 18
Cannon Beach Design Review Board, City Hall, 6 p.m. 163 E. Gower St.

Thursday, Feb. 25
Cannon Beach Planning Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

Friday, Feb. 26
Cannon Beach Emergency Preparedness Committee, 10 a.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

Tuesday, March 15
Cannon Beach Public Works, 9 a.m.,

City Hall 163 E. Gower St.

Seaside School District, 6 p.m., 1801 S. Franklin St.

Thursday, March 17
Cannon Beach Design Review Board, City Hall, 6 p.m. 163 E. Gower St.

Friday, March 23
Cannon Beach Emergency Preparedness Committee, 10 a.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

Thursday, March 24
Cannon Beach Planning Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

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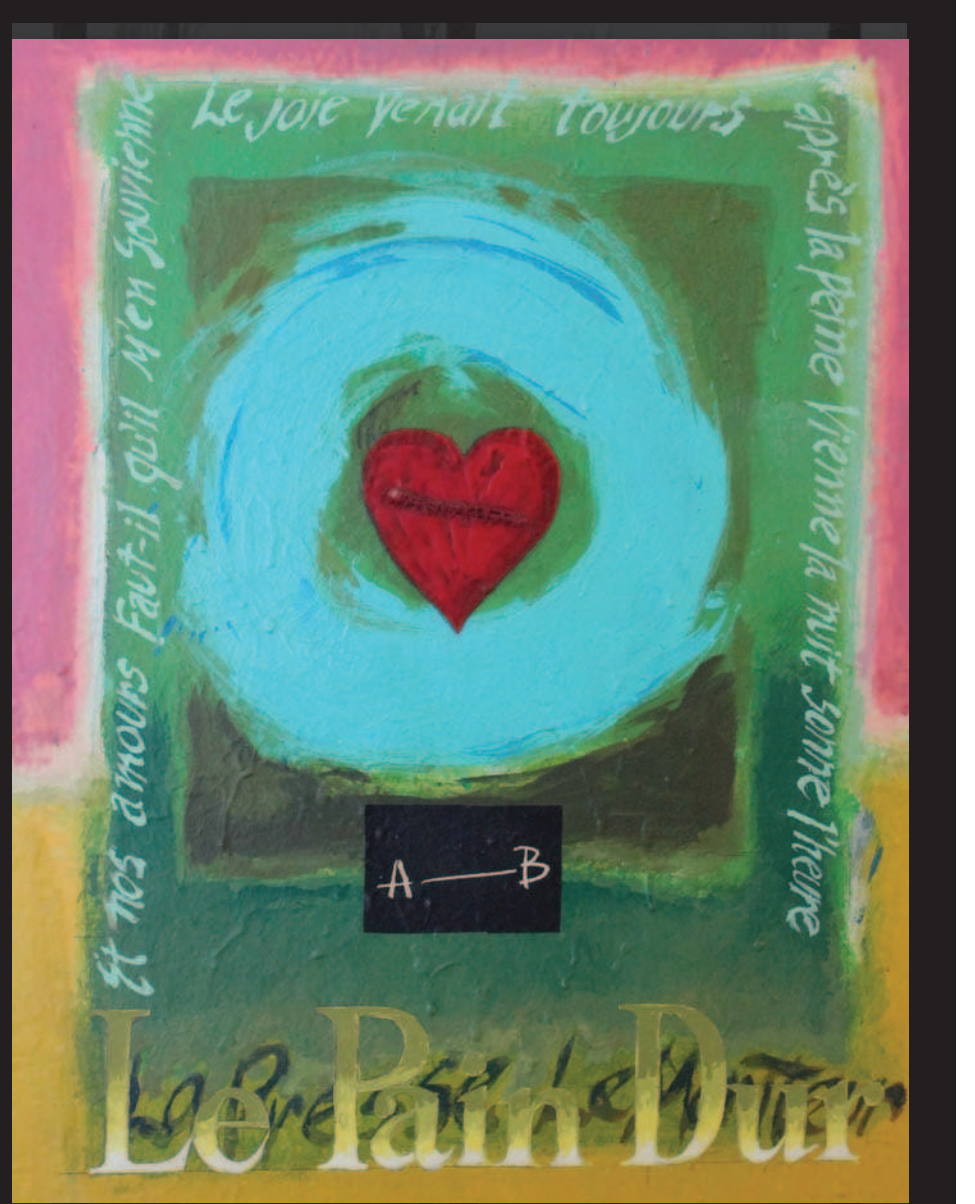
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Art for the Heart

Please join us for a Community Celebration of the Heart and artist reception on Valentine's Day, **Sunday, February 14, 2016, 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. at NCRD in Nehalem.**

Enjoy artwork by local artists, live music by Eric Sappington and delicious, heart healthy refreshments and sweet treats. Art for the Heart is a community art show in honor of American Heart Month. The show will hang at NCRD gallery through February. Please visit nwregionalheart.com to learn more about heart health.

MORE INFO: 503-815-2402 or email BellM1@ah.org.

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