



EO MEDIA GROUP/FILE PHOTO

A home located on the 0.57-acre property owned by Jeff Nicholson.

Cannon Beach nixes development again

Commission votes project down, but expects reversal

By Andrew Tonry
For Cannon Beach Gazette

“After dealing with this project for God knows how long, anybody around this, I don’t think anybody at this table, has a clue what it’s going to look like,” Cannon Beach Planning Commissioner Joe Bernt said. His comment drew the second-largest round of applause at the commission’s Jan. 28 meeting.

The loudest came after the body voted 6-0 against recommending approval of property owner Jeff Nicholson’s proposed four-unit plan.

Despite the decision, commissioners anticipate their recommendation will again be disregarded by the City Council.

After the city’s Planning Commission denied Nichol-

son’s application in December 2014, the Cannon Beach City Council reviewed the application and gave temporary approval in February.

In early March, councilors voted to adopt the findings by a 4-1 vote.

Challenges to plan

Nicholson seeks to convert his half-acre North Laurel Street lot and 100-year-old cottage into four family-sized homes.

A fourth home on the property will be rebuilt with a condition that the home’s wood, beams and windows be salvaged.

The property was purchased in 2014 for \$900,000.

Now in its third and final phase, and after successfully fending off the challenge in the Land Use Board of Appeals court, the application was reopened by the Planning Commission in December. That hearing was carried over to allow further public comment, as the Planning Commission claimed jurisdiction to approve

or deny Nicholson’s application on the basis it was incomplete.

While speaking on behalf of the “Friends of Cannon Beach,” a group formed to protest the development, Cannon Beach resident Jeff Harrison asked those in opposition to stand. He counted 27 people.

Commissioners asked Nicholson and his attorney for specifics, including when and how the new houses would be built, what they would look like, how trees would be protected, how the yard would be landscaped and shared, and how nearby neighbors would be protected should construction cause any collateral damage.

Nicholson said any residences erected on the property would be subject to compliance with Cannon Beach’s existing building codes.

“I have the followed the rules to a T on this,” Nicholson said. “I kind of expect everyone else to follow the rules to a T, so it’s disappointing to me when they don’t.”

Commissioners unanimously voted against the proposal.

“There were too many problems with it,” Kerr said. “If you have 10 things that bother you, you just have no frame to even start with. There’s not even a skeleton to flesh out.”

Council reversal likely

Despite the commission’s decision, the project will move forward unless the City Council does an about-face.

“Maybe the City Council will look at things a little more closely this time,” Commissioner Lisa Kerr said.

“Maybe they will,” said Bernt. “Maybe they won’t.”

The City Council is expected to consider final approval at their March meeting.

“For the Planning Commission to completely disregard the Land Use Board of Appeals and City Council decisions is just mind-boggling,” Nicholson said. “I’m confident the City Council will judge the application for its merits.”

Study suggested for Ecola Park Road

Traffic congestion, landslides are problems

By Nancy McCarthy
For Cannon Beach Gazette

A member of the Cannon Beach Public Works Committee is proposing that the committee embark on a long-range study to improve Ecola Park Road.

Les Wierson, who lives near the road that leads to Ecola State Park, told the committee at its meeting last week that traffic to the park is increasing every year. The steep, narrow and winding road needs improvements to handle the vehicles, pedestrians and bikers heading to and from the park, he said.

“We need better information about how to handle Ecola Park Road between Fifth and Ninth streets,” Wierson said. “The traffic has doubled or tripled in the last few years.”

Included in the study could be the development of a pedestrian path to the park, Wierson said.

“If we have some ideas for improvements, it would be a much more powerful tool to give to state parks,” he added. “I think the state should allocate money annually to maintain the road.”

Committee Chair Jenee Pearce asked Wierson to make specific recommendations about what the public works committee should study. Wierson said he would create a subcommittee that also would include Jan Siebert Wahrman, another public works committee member who lives near Ecola Park Road.

Public Works Director Dan Grassick said the hillside along Ecola Park Road is sliding between Seventh and Eighth streets, and pavement has been “torn” in some places.

Because the “S” curves on Ecola Park Road are suffering similar drainage problems that caused landslides on the “S” curves in midtown several years ago, the city will contact the contractor who repaired that problem, Grassick said.

However, it could be at least two years before the repairs are made, he said, because funding for the project must be put into the city budget before work can begin.

Meanwhile, the city will begin removing several alder trees along a 300-foot-long stretch of Ecola Park Road. The trees are beginning to lean into the roadway; recent heavy rainfall has exacerbated the problem, Grassick said.

The city also will remove the “heritage” spruce trees on Fifth and Larch streets on the north side of town, he added. Two arborists have told the city that the trees have “significant health issues” and are rotted at the base. Nearby residents will be notified, Grassick said.

“I don’t expect we will take them out for a couple of months,” he said. “There will be significant comment.”

Grassick said he expected other trees will be planted in their place, but they won’t be spruces. More tree trimming will be done on every street in Cannon Beach to make room for the Cannon Beach Rural Fire District’s ladder truck, said Grassick. Limbs extending longer than 14 feet will be cut back, but the trees will be pruned to balance them on every side, he said.

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