

# Residents disappointed by the decision to disband committee

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Marty Francis, of the Marty Francis Group in Portland, spent a year “dealing with” the Arch Cape Design Review Committee while trying to build and sell a residential beach house in Arch Cape, which he sold last fall.

“I was amazed that the county was not in line with what the folks were doing in Arch Cape,” Francis said. “I was approved by the state and county. Then all of a sudden, Arch Cape design review stopped me dead in my tracks.”

Although he described Clatsop County as “great,” Francis said it was frustrating to get “chewed out” by the Arch Cape committee.

“I was surprised by how vehemently opposed they were to any development in any wetland,” Francis said. “Frankly, they put me through hell.”

## Committee members ‘disappointed’

A reason given for disbanding the committee was its “hostile” attitude toward a staff member with a disability. Committee members said they were being portrayed in a “false light,” and comments were taken out of context.

“It’s tragic that the staff and commission used one incident as an excuse to eliminate something with that legacy,” Gardner said. “It’s a real slap in the face to people who have given much of their time and heart to the county and community.”

Although the disability-related issue played a role in the decision to disband the committee, other concerns drove the decision, interim County Manager Rich Mays said. According to Mays, commissioners were responding to complaints of a “two-step” review process and building delays as a result of the advisory committee’s oversight.

## Association to replace committee

While county commissioners dissolved the Arch Cape Design Review Committee, they agreed to formally recognize a neighborhood association in Arch Cape. The association could provide input on land use projects, but would lack legal authority.

Gardner, Lundy and Seifer said the neighborhood associations would be a far cry from the role played by the former committee, and Arch Cape would no longer have an official role in land use planning.

Moving forward, Lundy said that neighborhood associations are “an opportunity,”



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Residents of Arch Cape hope to resurrect a committee dissolved by the county earlier this month.

***‘It’s tragic.... It’s a real slap in the face to people who have given much of their time and heart to the county and community.’***

Nadia Gardner  
Arch Cape resident

but ultimately they have “no teeth.”

County Commissioner Lianne Thompson, who represents Arch Cape and joined other commissioners in voting to dissolve the committee, said Arch Cape residents were almost evenly divided on the committee.

Thompson said she attempted to delay the commission’s vote and give neighbors time to be heard, but was unsuccessful.

“People lost something that mattered to

them,” Thompson said. “I understand people are disappointed and there’s a loss of something precious. They put their heart and soul in it.”

Thompson said she is optimistic about a “fresh start.”

“Neighborhood associations are a way to maintain positive relationships and resolve differences,” she said. “It was a wonderful tradition, but it’s time to evolve. I hope it’s going to be better.”

## HRAP season is extended this year

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Volunteer duties include sharing marine life information, answering visitor questions, supporting conservation and stewardship of the area, data collection and recording, and educating visitors to prevent prohibited activities, such as collecting and climbing.

The program normally has about 100 to 200 volunteers, and hopes to have close to 200 this season. Since people can volunteer just several days out of the year, people come from all over the North coast, Oregon and even from Washington. Many volunteers come to Cannon Beach from Portland for several days, specifically to volunteer.

This year, the program will also provide two tablet computers for volunteers to reference and identification cards with pictures and information on birds, intertidal animals, plants and geology that volunteers can take to the rock.

Volunteers can RSVP for a training session at the Cannon Beach City Hall on April 9 or June 11. These sessions include training on plants and geology, bird ecology, intertidal animals and emergency preparedness. Volunteers may also train on the beach with experienced staff and volunteers.

## Longer season with new summer beach events

The HRAP season, which ends in October, was extended about three months this year, Keyser said.

“We’ll have more time to spend educating and on the beach with visitors,” Keyser said.

Haystack Rock has attracted more visitors than usual this February, she noted. The team has consistently counted 40 to 50 people on the beach every hour.

This year, HRAP will introduce a summer speaker series on the beach, with monthly events from May to September.

## Dwindling sea stars

The Haystack Rock area has lost a majority of its sea star population, which is still recovering. Large numbers of starfish have died along the Pacific Coast in recent years from a wasting syndrome, possibly caused by “densovirus.” Recently, the sea star wasting system has been linked to warmer temperatures, according to scientists in a paper published in Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society.

“I’m optimistic that the starfish population is going to rebound,” Owen said.

However, Haystack Rock has a large, healthy seabird population, and its intertidal species are doing well, Keyser said.

Earlier in February, the program noticed a huge population of common murre birds at the rock, a rare find before breeding season.

*Those interested in volunteering can contact volunteer coordinator Kelsey Brown at 503-436-8095 or hrappvolunteer@ci.cannon-beach.or.us.*



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