

Cannon Beach Academy still fighting for a fall opening

Charter school claims district set 'artificial barriers'

By Lyra Fontaine
Cannon Beach Gazette

Cannon Beach Academy representatives said they were "extremely disappointed" by the Seaside School District's decision to withdraw approval for the charter school's opening this fall.

They say the district erected unreasonable, "artificial barriers" to the academy's operation and should reconsider the decision.

Eight academy board members objected in a letter received by the school district last week. The school district withdrew approval last month based on the academy's failure to meet financial, enrollment and English as a Second Language requirements agreed upon in October.

The conditions, which were to be met by March, were intended to ensure that the academy would be "financially, structurally and academically ready" to open in the fall.

While acknowledging these conditions had not been met, academy board members asked the school district to "accept a certain level of un-



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David Vonada, of Tolovana Architects, presents the tentative site plan of the Cannon Beach Academy's temporary location, 171 Sunset Blvd., to the planning commission in 2015.

certainty" relating to enrollment and staff.

The academy board offered to meet with the district to "further discuss how we can move forward to commence Cannon Beach operations for the 2016-17 school year."

The public charter school is prepared to appeal the district's decision and seek sponsorship by the Oregon State Board of Education if an agreement is not reached by April 11, board members wrote.

Long road

In 2013, community residents sought to bring a charter school to Cannon Beach, with the goal of hosting kindergartners through fifth-graders.

The school district denied the academy's proposal several times, citing the lack of an adequate location and not enough startup funds.

In October, the Seaside School District board of directors unanimously approved a three-year contract with Cannon Beach Academy. Un-

der the conditions, the charter school would serve at least 44 kindergarten and first-grade students its first year. More grades could be added over time.

The charter school planned to open in fall at a temporary location at 171 Sunset Blvd., in a space that once housed the Cannon Beach Athletic Club.

'Artificial barriers'

In their letter, the academy board said they did not view the district's conditions as reasonable or appropriate when adopted. Board members were dismayed the district did not include the academy in reviewing and addressing the conditions before board approval.

However, the academy trusted the school district "would be reasonable" in considering the conditions.

The academy stated the conditions were imposed to "erect artificial barriers" to the charter school.

"We trust we are incorrect in drawing this conclusion," board members wrote.

One condition required the school have "all the money they need for the 2016-17 school year" in the bank, as well as a 10-percent contingency, amounting to about \$450,000.

The academy had \$145,798 by March 1, falling more than \$300,000 short.



The Cannon Beach Academy's logo, designed by Crowerks of Cannon Beach.

Academy board members said the school "has reasonably and appropriately demonstrated financial stability based on its cash at hand, pledges, and the projected revenue that will come from public funding of the charter school."

The funds raised and pledges received "demonstrates an enormous level of community support for the school," academy directors said.

Enrollment fell short

The academy also objected to the school district's condition of 22 students enrolled in a district kindergarten class.

The district required a minimum of 22 enrolled students in both kindergarten and first-grade classes. Sixteen first-graders were enrolled as of March 1.

Superintendent Doug Dougherty and Superinten-

dent-elect Sheila Roley said without enough students, the district would be unable to make necessary adjustments in programs, class size and staffing.

The academy also lacked a state-approved English language learners program by proposing an outdated program, Dougherty and Roley wrote.

According to academy members, the academy had developed a program using information from the Oregon Department of Education that they "reasonably believed" to be state-approved, board members wrote. The error is "immaterial" and "easily corrected."

Academy board members said the district's decision was "neither reasonable or lawful."

"Oregon law does not provide for conditional approval and the purported conditions which are alleged to have not been met are themselves unreasonable and inconsistent with the spirit and intent of Oregon's charter school law," they wrote.

Despite the March decision to revoke approval, Dougherty and Roley stated that the district remained committed to seeing the charter school up and running and that Cannon Beach Academy could begin operating in fall 2017, if it meets the conditions.

Can you smell 'em? Blue jellies are back

Hydroid polyps wash up and decompose on North Coast

By Lyra Fontaine
Cannon Beach Gazette

Millions of bluish-purple jellies called *Verella vellera* have been washing ashore again on North Coast beaches, blown in by fierce western winds.

This year's population has been slightly different in that it consists mostly of juvenile *Verellas*, while last year they were larger, said Melissa Keyser, the Haystack Rock Awareness program coordinator.

"We're seeing little tiny ones, some of them as small as a grain of sand," Tiffany Boothe of the Seaside Aquarium said. "When we get them a little later, they've grown up more, so they're 3 to 4 inches."

The Seaside Aquarium first spotted them in early March. Beach visitors have asked the aquarium why the beach is "stained purple."

The creatures, which are slick when stepped on, can sting to capture prey, but human skin is too thick to feel the stings. *Verellas* give off an odor because they are decomposing.

"Once they hit the beach, there's nothing we can do to save them," Boothe said.

However, she said there's no danger that the *Verellas* are dying off. "It's just a small portion of them," she said.

Also called "by-the-wind sailors," half of the *Verella* colony catches the wind one way, and the other half catches the wind the other way, Boothe said.

On the north side of the Pacific Ocean, *Verella* sails are set in a northwest-southeast



TIFFANY BOOTHE/SEASIDE AQUARIUM

Verella vellera are washing up along the North Coast.

'Once they hit the beach, there's nothing we can do to save them.'

Tiffany Boothe,
of the Seaside Aquarium

direction. On the other side of the Pacific, the sails point in the opposite direction.

"It's very active natural selection," said Bill Hanshumaker, Ocean Sea Grant Chief Scientist at the Hatfield Marine Science Center in Newport. "The sail is to keep them from dying and if the sail works, they reproduce."

Keyser said *Verellas* wash up most years in large groups, but not every year. "It is not fully understood why they blow in some years and not in others."

Each *Verella* is a colony of hydroid polyps closely related to jellyfish and anemones. The translucent, triangular "sail" on their backs help the *Verellas* float parallel to the shoreline in mild winds.

The sail allows them to

track 45 degrees away from the shore, but persistent winds blow them onshore.

Salmon and forage fish are adversely affected by warm water, while jellies are not, Hanshumaker said. This is because higher temperatures, exacerbated by El Niño and a warm region of water in the North Pacific, affect the types of plankton available.

"The jellies end up taking advantage, so you'll see more jellies and fewer salmon and forage fish during a warm water regime," Hanshumaker said. "Jellies are doing well right now, which isn't good for us because we don't need them."



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A close-up of *Verella vellera* showing the tiny sail on its back that helps the *Verella* float parallel to the shoreline in mild winds.

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Volunteers sought for trail clean-up

North Coast Land Conservancy has a growing trail system at its Circle Creek Habitat Reserve, at the south end of Seaside. The conservancy is seeking volunteers to join them on Saturday, April 23, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. to help get those trails ready for the spring and summer hiking season. In addition to the short Legacy Loop nature trail, the conservancy is developing a longer Circle Creek and Wetlands Walk that includes a long stretch of boardwalk. Volun-

teers will brush out and mulch the nature trail and portions of the wetlands walk and repairing or replacing footbridges and anything else disturbed by winter flooding. Volunteers from Northwest Coast Trails Coalition are partnering with the land conservancy on the trails clean-up day.

Anyone interested in learning more or in participating should contact Stewardship Director Melissa Reich at melissar@nclctrust.org in advance.

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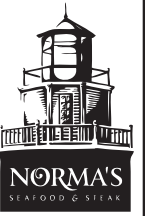
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