

County won't budge on Arch Cape committee dissolution

County intends to disband panel

By Jack Heffernan
Cannon Beach Gazette

Following a contentious public hearing, a decision to nix the Arch Cape Design Review Committee has been tabled, though its dissolution may be inevitable.

The Clatsop County Board of Commissioners voted 4-1 on Wednesday, May 10, in favor of an ordinance to dissolve the committee, but needed unanimous approval since the vote was called immediately following the public hearing. Another vote likely will take place at the board's meeting later this month, which will require a simple majority to pass. County commissioners previously voted twice to dissolve the committee, and an appeal was filed with the state Land Use Board of Appeals.

The appeals board sent the decision back to the county, saying it did not provide public notice of a previous hearing in a newspaper of general circulation.

Testimony

The hourlong hearing Wednesday night included testimony from five people who disagreed with county staff's and most of the commissioners' characterizations of the design review committee.



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Residents in Arch Cape have fought to save a design review committee.

Opponents have raised concerns about Arch Cape residents losing power to review lands in their community. But neighborhood associations and amendments to the county development code could provide review in the absence of the committee, Community Development Director Heather Hansen said.

"The issue before you tonight is not whether citizen involvement is important to the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners," Hansen said. "It's about the appropriate role for a county-appointed committee that advises on land use decisions."

County counsel Chris Cream said the county has been liable to legal ramifications because the committee has not followed procedural or public

meetings rules. Commissioner Lianne Thompson added she is one of multiple Arch Cape residents that has been confronted by members of the committee either in person or over the phone regarding various issues.

'Insulting'

Michael Manzulli, an attorney from Cannon Beach, said during public testimony that the committee is advisory in nature and makes no decisions. He called the charge that the committee did not follow legally mandated procedures "insulting."

"This council is drumming up all kinds of fear to get rid of us," he said. "This is a staff-driven mission to dismiss us, and it's really upsetting."

Tevis Dooley, a contractor from Arch Cape, presented commissioners with a petition in favor of the committee — formed in the 1970s — with 216 signatures and 94 comments.

County Commissioner Kathleen Sullivan, who represented the sole vote against the ordinance, said she hopes the county will find a way to keep the committee functioning.

"This organization has been existing a long time, and people seem like they want to work it out," Sullivan said. "I wish we could find a way to work it out."

Because commissioners did not reach unanimous agreement Wednesday, the committee has stayed off elimination for another few weeks.

"The county is at fiscal risk," Commission Chairman Scott Lee said.

City proposes funding housing project

Housing from Page 1A

employees could benefit, Kucera said.

"I think it's important to have the sector that attracts this type of work help offset the cost for housing," he said.

But City Councilor George Vetter said in a work session May 9 that the cost to businesses may outweigh the benefits.

"I'm uncomfortable with this whole idea. We're taxing such a tiny group of people, and not making that much money off of it," Vetter said. "If there was more developable land in Cannon Beach, I could see this making a difference."

City Councilor Mike



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The Cannon Beach affordable housing task force recommended installation of four park-model homes like this one shown from Woodburn.

Benefield said he saw Vetter's point, but would consider the

tax as one of many ways the city can support affordable housing.

"It's not our only option. It could help just supplement expenditures," he said.

Vetter suggested the possibility of floating a bond instead.

"Affordable housing is everyone's problem, so everyone should help solve it," Vetter said.

City councilors will have to vote to approve or deny the tax by the end of June before the budget is submitted. Kucera said if the tax is not passed, there is discretionary money in the general fund to help make up the difference to ensure the four new units are built and operated.

Residents to see 3 percent water rate hike

Water from Page 1A

Butting heads

During a special meeting Tuesday, May 9, Grassick and members of the public works committee did find common ground on projects such as replacing brittle water lines, upgrading outdated pump stations and fixing sand filtration systems.

But there were clashes over the necessity and cost of a supervisory control and data acquisition system, called SCADA, that would automate data-point collection and give remote access to operators.

"I think we should be cautious and take slow steps into this instead of all at once," committee member Les Wierson said.

Grassick reminded the committee to think of the plan more like a 20-year wish

list to work off slowly. The advantage of a plan like this is so that when it is submitted to the state, there is evidence to say the city has a plan to solve a known problem, Grassick said. That in turn helps keep a city's insurance rates low.

"You want to replace your system every 80 to 100 years," Grassick said. "That is an industry goal. It's about resiliency."

While the committee agreed many of the projects were necessary, they didn't feel comfortable recommending to City Council a rate increase that committee member Carolyn Propst said felt problematic.

"For the past four years, the average amount of water used per household has been 4,270 gallons. But in the rate study, it was based on 3,270 gallons," she said. "Funda-

mental assumptions were not reconciled between actual usage and that is my main concern. How can the amount of water we use be that different from one year?"

Next steps

The public works committee will now spend the next week preparing what they will recommend to the City Council to adopt at the next council meeting. But in the long term the committee will need to spend time reviewing priorities and looping back with consultants about alternatives, Grassick said.

"Those decisions will drive what rates may look like," Grassick said.

Some on the committee believe that many of the projects included in the master plans should be paid for with a general obligation bond rather than revenue bonds from rates.

"GO bonds are something the people can vote for," Wierson said. "And it's the best way to have second-home owners pay their fair share."

It's a strategy that has worked in the past. In 2012 voters in Cannon Beach passed a bond to construct the wastewater treatment facility.

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