

Planning Commission OKs Cannon Beach Academy site

Traffic, tsunami inundation zone considered

By Brenna Visser
Cannon Beach Gazette



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The Cannon Beach Academy hopes to open a charter school at the former Preschool and Children's Center.

An almost identical request was approved by the Planning Commission in May 2015 and again in January at 171 Sunset Blvd.

David Vonada, of Tolovana Architects, said at the meeting most of the work will be small safety improvements, like improving exit signs and making door handles Americans with Disabilities Act accessible, and expects few to no external changes.

"This building was just meant to be," Vonada said.

While the city, which owns the property, did assess the building to be structurally sound and found that a charter school would not impact traffic

therefore not bound by these restrictions.

One of the reasons the original elementary school closed in 2013 was due to tsunami safety concerns. But neither Vonada, Planning Commission chair Bob Lundy or Barnes found this to be a high priority issue for the charter school because of the site's proximity to evacuation routes and access to higher ground.

"With the old elementary school, it's a 20 minute walk to higher ground, and you would have to cross a bridge," Barnes said.

Because the school has opted to use a parent rideshare system instead of a school bus, Commissioner Joe Bernt raised concerns about possible congestion in what is already a narrow parking lot with only one exit.

"We will have a half-hour drop-off window to give students extra time," Cannon Beach Academy Executive Director Amy Moore told the Planning Commission.

Other aspects, such as additional ADA requirements or fire code improvements, are to be determined later by the city's building official.

Community input wanted on new city manager

By Brenna Visser
Cannon Beach Gazette

The process to recruit to replace Cannon Beach City Manager Brant Kucera is now in full swing, starting with feedback from the community.

Kucera announced his departure earlier this month to take another city manager job in Sisters, citing a need for a "change of pace." The role of the city manager is to carry out policy, programs and procedures decided by the city council and supervising city staff.

Police Chief Jason Schermerhorn will act as interim city manager starting in July.

Jensen Strategies, the recruitment firm hired by the city to conduct the nationwide search, has four months to develop a job profile with input from the community, staff and city councilors, advertise and conduct interviews. Schermerhorn can only act as interim for four months, otherwise the city will violate its charter.

Interviews with city councilors and staff will be closed meetings, but a community

forum will be held 5:30 p.m. Thursday, July 6 at city hall for anyone who would like to offer suggestions of what qualities the recruiters should look for in the next city manager.

"We want to find someone who fits the community," Eric Jensen from Jensen Strategies said.

The job posting from when Kucera was hired in 2014 listed experience with disaster preparedness, finance, news media, an appreciation for the arts and five years experience

in public administration as preferable qualities in a candidate.

After collecting input from the community, the city council will vote whether or not to adopt the job description at the August 1 city council meeting. Final candidates will hold meet-and-greet forums later in the fall.

When Kucera was hired, he was chosen from a pool of 47 applicants. Jensen said he anticipated the city will get a similar applicant pool this year, as well.

Council paves way for continuing parking discussion

Parking from Page 1A
Parking petition

Cannon Beach Police Chief Jason Schermerhorn said the city decided to postpone installing signs and enforcing the rule until it is discussed again at the July 10 City Council meeting.

"There's been a lot of citizens upset by it," said Schermerhorn, who will soon be the interim city manager. "(City councilors) are going to give citizens an opportunity to write to them or come to offer any different ideas."

A petition outlining grievances with the plan started circulating about a week ago. As of Monday, the petition had 114 signatures, though many who signed live outside of Cannon Beach.

The petition, started by Voyages Toy Co. owner Jeremy Clifford, argued that timed parking would "negatively impact the relaxing atmosphere" of the town, "increase traffic congestion when cars need to be moved," and "not allow visitors enough time to enjoy the restaurants and browse through the local shops."

Clifford said there hasn't been any evidence to show that higher turnover would lead to higher sales in a town like Cannon Beach.

"We want people to come out to the beach and then come into town to shop and eat in our restaurants. Three hours isn't enough time to do that," Clifford said. "Believe me: I want to make more



BRENNNA VISSER/CANNON BEACH GAZETTE

Cannon Beach has postponed a pilot program on timed parking downtown.

money. And if I thought for one minute I thought the time limit would bring more customers in my store I'd support it, but I don't believe it."

In a year where sales across all businesses have been down due to an unusually harsh winter, Clifford said business owners object to experimenting during the city's busiest season.

"The summer here is our Christmastime for other retailers," Clifford said. "Best practices tells us you don't do tests like this during your busiest season. If there are going to be negative impacts, you don't want them to be huge."

Clifford and others who signed the petition are pleased the city is postponing the plan to get feedback from the community. Ultimately, Clifford said he fears timed parking signage and an increase in parking tickets from violations would negatively impact the quaint, small-town

visitor experience — as well as their desire to ever return.

"If (employees parking on Hemlock) is the problem you are trying to solve, then that's a different problem to solve. Let's all agree on that because I want the customers to have easy access to my stores," Clifford said. "But the parking problem in Cannon Beach is larger than that. It's connected to housing, commuting, city infrastructure — it will take many years."

Clearing up confusion

In an effort to clear up confusion about the city's intention with timed parking, City Councilor George Vetter spent last week walking, measuring and counting all the parking within a five-minute walk of

the corner of Morris' Fireside at Hemlock and Second.

In total, Vetter counted spaces for 835 cars the size of a Dodge Grand Caravan. Of those spaces, about 100 are affected by timed parking, he said. Since his experiment, he said he has been speaking with some concerned business owners about what he found.

"My goal was to present the facts," Vetter said. "The negative reactions from people seemed like they were fearing something they didn't know all the facts about. So I wanted to inform them and let them decide."

Vetter said that having a higher turnover rate would give more people a chance to park downtown, which in turn would increase the number of possible customers for businesses. The City Council voted unanimously for the pilot program in May.

"Everybody likes convenience. And the most convenient place is Hemlock," Vetter said. "This is a way to have more people use downtown for parking to shop and eat downtown. And employees and beachgoers who use parking for eight to nine hours a day have 735 other options." "It's not easy to make money in this town," he added. "You've got to maximize whatever you can."

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