

# Committee recommends phasing in rate increase

Water from Page 1A

costs without dipping into the general fund, according to both Arndt and his predecessor, Dan Grassick.

The sharp increase would allow critical projects to be steadily funded by ratepayers rather than relying on hotel and rental room tax revenue — which, when the economy is poor, can create funding instability for these projects.

Financing 100 percent of these high-priority projects with rates would help the department catch up on projects, as well as reduce the impact on future maintenance costs, Arndt said. But doing this would require rates to raise closer to 60 percent.

“We want to provide for and maintain this system sustainability,” Arndt said.

Most committee members agree there are parts of

the system that have been neglected and need to be replaced, but are uncomfortable recommending a rate increase that would finance any more than 50 percent of water infrastructure projects and 75 percent of wastewater projects listed in the plan. Doing so still generates \$2.1 million and \$1.61 million for water and wastewater projects, respectively.

Most members have disagreements about what infrastructure projects should be considered as a No.1 priority, so only providing partial funding encourages the city to prioritize projects and pursue alternative funding options like bonds and grants, committee member Douglas Craner said.

“We want to encourage the city to look at other solutions,” Craner said. “We’re not wanting things to fall

**‘We want to encourage the city to look at other solutions. We’re not wanting things to fall apart, we just don’t want it all to fall on ratepayers.’**

Douglas Craner, public works committee

apart, we just don’t want it all to fall on ratepayers.”

The committee also is recommending the City Council phase in rate increases over five years, which would mean residents would see a 35 percent and 5 percent rate increase for water and wastewater respectively in the first year, and single-digit rate increases for the following four years. After five years, rates would only be adjusted for inflation.

“There are things that need to get done, and I think we can do that with a lower funding level,” said Rich

Bertellotti, the public works committee chairman. “We all recognize issues with how it was prepared, but this is an outline — not a plan to be followed like a blueprint.”

## Lingering issues

While the committee voted to recommend approving the water and wastewater master plan and rate increases, they did so with reservations.

Les Wierson, the one committee member who voted against the recommendation, said there are still too many issues with the plan itself for

him to support rate increases associated with it.

Wierson took issue with a plan that appeared to be trying to replace an entire water system, which he deems as excessive, he said.

“The proposed 20-year plan is very large, especially for a small city staff available to guide, inspect and approve the new construction,” Wierson said.

Craner expressed concerns that the plan lacks “schedule and implementation ability.”

The committee chose to retain the current rate structure, which includes an allowance of 400 cubic feet of water usage, after deciding the alternative rate options provided by the consulting firm Civil West Engineering Services would disproportionately impact homeowners in comparison with large commercial outfits. The committee, how-

ever, is still recommending to the city to continue exploring more equitable rate structures that would encourage more conservation, committee member Carolyn Propst said.

“I think we should work forward with what we have, get an increase to pay for some of these projects and then take a deeper dive into structures,” Propst said. “This is not a static, one-time decision.”

Arndt will provide a recommendation that “follows the need of the system,” which could differ from the conclusion of the public works committee, he said.

“We aren’t trying to rebuild a whole system in 20 years. It’s good practice to replace them every 80, and to do that you have keep up the progress, little by little, so the system lasts in perpetuity,” Arndt said.



COURTESY HRAP

Wearable art jewelry made from microplastics.

## Trash Talk: Marine debris wearable art jewelry

The Haystack Rock Awareness Program has created a wearable art jewelry line crafted from marine debris named “Trash Talk,” intended to support the program and spark conversations that lead to more environmental stewardship.

Participants are invited to collect microplastics — small plastic trash that washes up on our beaches — and donate it to be repurposed into wearable art jewelry.

The Haystack Rock Awareness Program is also accepting donations of old or broken jewelry that will be reused in these new pieces. Microplastic collections and old, broken jewelry should be placed in a bag or container and left in the garbage bin labeled “Haystack Rock Awareness Program Marine Debris,” located at the back entrance of Cannon Beach City Hall next to the

Dumpster. Include contact information.

One gallon of beach debris is sufficient material to host two to five workshops, make more than 30 pieces of jewelry or one art piece.

The art and jewelry can now be purchased online through the Friends of Haystack Rock’s new Etsy shop. A selection of specialty pieces is also being sold through the Cannon Beach Art Gallery. The funding received through this project supports the Haystack Rock Awareness Program’s ongoing efforts to provide high quality student and citizen science programs and to spread awareness to all visitors.

For more information, contact Pooka Rice, Haystack Rock Awareness Program Outreach Coordinator at 503-436-8079, email [lrice@ci.cannon-beach.or.us](mailto:lrice@ci.cannon-beach.or.us).

## Revamped WOW! event ‘not just for women’

WOW from Page 1A

While the annual mid-November event still has a feminine bent, Melissa Dupre of EVOO and Buddie Anderson from the Cannon Beach Library renamed the event WOW! — which is how the event was referred to casually — as a way to expand the event to be more inclusive of all people.

“I moved here a few years ago, and I fell in love with it. Why? Because it is amazing. This event is to show why we love Cannon Beach,” Dupre said. “We wanted to make sure it’s not just for women. It’s still geared that way — still pink, still women leaders. But this event is for everyone — and every type of woman.”

Dupre got involved after the former organizer, Wendy Higgins, left town and reached out to her about participating. Before this year, the event was sponsored business by business, and individual vendors would receive the proceeds of their sales. But in order to expand, Dupre needed to apply for a Tourism Arts Commission grant, which requires grant funds to benefit some kind of non-profit.

That’s where Anderson stepped in.

“I knew of WOW before, but we had never been asked to participate,” Anderson said. “Last year, was the first time we got involved when Melissa asked if we would have a female author for the weekend. We made sure we had a female author for that weekend,” Anderson said. “When she said she needed to partner with a nonprofit, I said ‘Hey, why not us?’”

With a \$6,500 grant secured from the Tourism Arts Commission fund, the two were able to expand the weekend to offer painting classes, craft events, children’s events, music and a poker night. All of the proceeds of the event will then benefit the Cannon Beach Library.

“We could take everything to the next level,” Anderson said. “Last year, everything was done on a shoestring budget. Without worrying about pinching pennies, now we are making it fun.”

Since this is the first year the Cannon Beach Library has been the recipient, Anderson isn’t sure what to expect from the proceeds. But with hotel rooms booked and events near full, Anderson expected it to be significant.

## Commissioner Bernt objects to changes

Housing from Page 1A

This trend, paired with very little developable land, makes affordable housing a challenge. Bartl suggests reducing the city’s parking requirements as a way to entice more developers to build.

“This is not a unique problem. Parking takes up a lot of land, and it drives up cost for the developer. The requirements are excessive, and if you are using that land for parking, that’s land you aren’t using for housing,” Bartl said.

The issue of parking requirements hindering affordable housing has been a topic of discussion in cities across the country, including Portland and Eugene. A study by the Victoria Transport Policy Institute in British Columbia found that one parking space per affordable housing unit increases costs by approximately 12.5 percent, which eventually translates into higher rent. It also found the demand for parking in affordable housing complexes surveyed was 50 percent of what most cities require.

While the study mostly considered urban areas, Bartl argues these impacts are similar in Cannon Beach. Bartl surveyed how many parking spots were occupied at Shorewood Apartments and Elk Creek Terrace — the two subsidized housing complexes in town — and found on average 80 percent of all of the parking was occupied by residents.

Bartl is also asking the city to raise building height requirements from 28 feet to 32 feet in the R3 zone — the zone that permits multifamily housing. Because hotels are already permitted to be built to 32 feet, he argues most people would not notice a visual difference.

His last proposal would allow developers to build multifamily housing on land zoned for commercial. Currently, only 50 percent of property in commercial zoning can be allocated for housing.

In the interest of transparency, Bartl said changing the zoning requirements is in the best interest of Clark, who is seeking to develop workforce housing on land he owns that is zoned commercial. But Bartl argues the positive impacts of these changes extend beyond Clark’s project.

“Coaster has lots of employees, and always has a hard time finding housing for them. Having half developed as housing is good, but think



COLIN MURPHEY/EO MEDIA GROUP

Nick Betts with Coaster Construction paints a room in a new house in Cannon Beach.

**‘People will always find reasons to oppose affordable housing. (The Sea Lark Apartments) is a test case. Do you want to add to affordable housing or not? It’s the difference between rhetoric and reality.’**

Rainmar Bartl

if you can make the whole site more housing,” Bartl said. “At some point you have to decide what your priorities are, and the city has signaled affordable housing is a priority. If you’re going to rely on the private sector to solve this, it financially has to work out for them.”

## A lukewarm reception

City Planner Mark Barnes said he has talked with many people who have expressed similar frustrations as Bartl and Clark when it comes to attempting to develop affordable properties in Cannon Beach, but said this is the first time someone has gotten as far as to request code changes in a public way.

“There’s only so much a city can do as a regulatory body for affordable housing,” Barnes said. “A lot is directed at private developers. So we do want to look at our code to see if we have any roadblocks that make it harder for them to create affordable housing.”

During Bartl’s testimony, many planning commissioners had reservations about the changes, and questioned the city’s role in creating workforce housing. Some wanted

to wait to see more progress with the city’s plan to establish affordable tiny homes in the town’s RV park before approving major code changes.

“Why is it that this is our problem rather than the employer’s problem?” Planning Commission Chairman Bob Lundy said. He suggested employers should offer subsidies and salary supplements so workers could live in town.

Barnes responded that it is important to make sure current ordinances aren’t acting as obstruction for employers who do want to provide housing.

Commissioner Joe Bernt questioned the validity of the parking survey Bartl conducted at the low-income housing complexes. Without robust public transit, some commissioners argued cars are a necessity in places like Clatsop County.

“I’m not sure if how many cars you see at 8 p.m. for three nights is a good way of determining parking standards,” he said.

Bernt also objected to raising rooflines to 32 feet in a residential zone, and said he thought there were ways to build three-story buildings without doing so.

“I think we are better off facilitating exceptions and variances,” Bernt said. “There’s not much land left in Cannon Beach, and there are houses that could be built following our current rules. This R3 zone will be increasingly valuable and attractive to people who want to move here and retire.”

For now, city staff will create a draft ordinance reflecting Bartl and Clark’s suggestions, which will be evaluated by commissioners and the community at January’s public hearing.

“People will always find reasons to oppose affordable housing,” Bartl said. “(The Sea Lark Apartments) is a test case. Do you want to add to affordable housing or not? It’s the difference between rhetoric and reality.”

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