

A move from Longboat Key to Cannon Beach

St. Denis adjusts to Oregon living after long career in coastal Florida

With the new year comes a new city manager. You'll see him at city council meetings, with his hands folded and his trusty Chick-fil-A cup next to the microphone replacing a coffee cup — a tradition he carried over from his 15-year stint as city manager in Longboat Key, Florida. In December, the city of Cannon Beach hired Bruce St. Denis to replace former manager Brant Kucera, who left for a job in Sisters in June. After a four-month-long hiring process, St. Denis now sits in the hot seat to carry out the agenda of the city council on top issues like affordable housing, emergency preparedness and aging infrastructure. The Cannon Beach Gazette sat down with St. Denis to ask him a few questions.

Q: Where did you grow up?

A: Rome, New York. I went to architecture school in Buffalo, and moved to Florida senior year.

My Buffalo experience is how I know I will survive the weather here.

Q: Where does your passion for architecture and development come from?

A: I have somewhat of a creative mind, so that's why I liked the architecture. I've always liked building things.

Q: How did you transition into the public sector?

A: When I got out of architecture school, no one was building anything but Burger Kings. There weren't many jobs. I went to work at local public works department (in Largo, Florida), and I never thought I'd want to stay with that. But I was so impressed with people doing the work.

In my opinion, these folks are in the busi-



BRENNNA VISSER/CANNON BEACH GAZETTE
Bruce St. Denis takes on role as Cannon Beach's new city manager.

ness of doing miracles. If there is a line break on Christmas Eve, they are out there fixing it. I admire the commitment and the creativity of how they solve problems.

Q: What are some of your proudest moments?

A: Longboat Key has long association with circus world with the connection of the Ringling hotel. The Flying Wallendas performed right out on the street did the seven person pyramid. That was a once in a lifetime situation for everyone there. They brought in clowns. Bringing in the flag. The flag temporary redesign of town symbol.

I also had a situation that was a real boot camp for emergency management. We found in the old criminal courts building we had legionnaires bacteria detected.

That was a day where you forgot what you were going to do today. We decided from the get go to be transparent. We had to deal with

GUEST COLUMN

BRENNNA VISSER



the maximum security jail connected — we tested all the inmates, and we didn't have any positive cases. But it was a situation where we were asking, "Are we really looking at evacuating a maximum security jail?" It was national media boot camp.

You always were responsible for a lot of people's health, but this was a direct threat, and you're the group that has to take care of it. That's my standard now for getting excited.

Q: First impression of Cannon Beach?

A: We came to visit on a vacation. I loved the charm, the people.

Q: What attracts you to beach communities?

A: "I've always been a water kid. Had some life changes, moved to the beach. Stayed on the beach the whole time working in the county, then to longboat key. What's not to like?"

Q: When you aren't working what do you like to do?

A: I play a lot of guitar. I swim, hang out with my wife and daughter, who are my best friends. I like to fly-fish.

Q: What kind of music?

A: I have several vintage guitars. I've been in blues bands. My favorite is acoustic guitar — I'm a purist.

Q: What's an unexpected part of the job of city manager?

A: I don't think people realize how much they rely on the city. The fact clean water comes out of the faucet, you can put out garbage and it gets taken away. An awful lot that goes into that, and the people who do it are really dedicated to doing it.

I just hear people solving problems for people. If there 1,700 people here, and one has a problem, you may hear about it or not but someone put a lot of time into solving that problem.

Q: What Cannon Beach issues excite you?

A: It's very similar to the issues. One exciting is coming in with fresh eyes. From a technical side, I like the public works side. I was heavily involved with state beach program — the beach is something I know very well. A lot of the other issues, the seasonality, the difference in perception of year round people versus someone who is here part time and all of them are necessary. We want to balance that."

Q: What will be some new challenges?

A: "Weather. Actually no, one difference is relative remoteness of beach communities. It took you awhile off longboat, but then you were on Sarasota — operas, two colleges, we had a DMV."

Q: What traits should manager have?

A: "I write down self reflection. Most would write down confidence, decision making, but to me, but because of with number of people you deal with, delicacy of subject matter you have to be pretty centered. Most people would be shocked to know I'm a flaming introvert.

Q: What would you do different?

A: The last job there was a big change in the commission and great recession. I was trying to protect Longboat Key from the entire world. But it became personal and I let it become personal. But it's hard when you are being attacked on a personal basis.

Q: What from your Longboat Key experience do you want to bring here?

A: If there's something going on that's a problem, I really want to talk to everyone involved to solve problems that some people think aren't necessary solvable.

Combating the dreaded winter gloom

We were tucked into a cozy corner at Screw & Brew, drinking craft beer and doing oyster shooters. Outside it was raining (what else?), literally sideways. It was a Friday afternoon, still midday, almost the weekend. To my mind, it was probably a little early to be drinking, although isn't this what we love about the coast? No matter the day or the hour, you can always make believe you're on vacation.

As we ate and drank, I was telling the spouse about a phone conversation I'd just had with someone back east. He's a new work connection for me, so before we got down to it, it seemed a good idea to shoot the breeze. I knew this guy, now an FBI-trained New York police lieutenant, once upon a time served in the U.S. Coast Guard. I asked if he'd done any duty on the west coast, and he said he had. He'd spent some time in California, but said he'd been to Astoria.

What'd you think? I asked.

It was in the middle of winter, he said. It was dark and gray. It rained the whole time I was there. I'm a person who needs sun, so, so I put in to finish out my time in the Florida Keys. Have you been there?

I said I had.

While this winter has been nowhere near as gloomy as last winter, I appreciated his candor. We moved this far west in part to escape the brutal north east winters we'd experienced. After years of digging out under massive dumps of snow and daytime temps so low they made your teeth rattle, the moderate climate of the PNW where even in January and February it rarely drops

VIEW FROM THE PORCH

EVE MARX



below freezing was incredibly appealing. What I hadn't counted on was relentless rain and how much I'd miss the sun, even a cold, glinting on ice, flinty sun. While we PNWers do get that occasional glorious winter day where the sun shines for a few hours and temps hover in the 60s, there is no way to get around the fact that the color of the coastal winter sky is a resolute battleship gray. Is it any wonder if you can't escape for a few weeks in Hawaii, you might make a hobby of drinking your afternoons away?

I took a moment to look up some tips from professionals how to survive a gloomy winter. By now the whole world knows about SAD, which stands for seasonal affect disorder, a debilitating health condition brought on by lack of light. Symptoms of SAD include fatigue, difficulty sleeping, experiencing a lack of focus, muscle and joint pain. Irritability, weight gain, anxiety, and recklessness are associated symptoms. Recklessness can evidence itself through compulsive behaviors, including risky sex, gambling, substance abuse, and thrill seeking.

If you think you might be suffering from SAD, experts recommend investing in a SAD lamp. This is an easy to use light therapy that combats depression. They sell them starting at \$39.99 on Amazon. Professionals additionally recommend



EVE MARX

Oyster shooters go a long way to combat winter doldrums.

being active, even if that activity is a half hour walk in the middle of the day. It's good to get outdoors and breathe in the fresh sea air. Stay warm. Take up a hobby. Eat healthy. Speaking of food, eat oysters. (They're a natural aphrodisiac and Valentine's Day is just around the corner anyhow.) Oysters, in addition to being pure protein, are a great source of zinc and vitamin B12. Zinc helps the body fight stress and is essential to the part of the brain that regulates mood and memory.

Why wait? Hurry over to Screw & Brew and have a round of oyster shooters.

Clatsop County Job and Career Fair offers opportunities



FILE PHOTO

Adults and students are invited to the job fair.

Clatsop Economic Development Resources and WorkSource Northwest Oregon spearhead the fourth annual Clatsop County Job and Career Fair on Wednesday, Feb. 21, from 10 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. at Patriot Hall at the Lexington Campus of Clatsop Community College in Astoria.

Seaside, Astoria, Ilwaco, Jewell, Knappa, Naselle and Warrenton high schools will be sending all juniors and seniors in the morning and will be finished by 1 p.m. At 1:15 p.m. the doors will re-open for adult job seekers, Clatsop Community College students, and those seeking more information about career and job opportunities in Clatsop County. More than 700

students will be in attendance, and many college students and adult job seekers.

To register as an employer to participate in the career and job fair, call Debbie Newton from WorkSource Oregon at 503-325-4821, ext. 226, email her at Debbie.M.Newton@oregon.gov, or register at clatsopjobfair.com, under the employer tab. This event is free.

Employers are asked to register as soon as possible as the entire list of employers participating will be provided to the schools in advance, and space is limited.

Contact Kevin Leahy at kleahy@clatsopcc.edu or 503-338-2342 to sign up to be a financial sponsor.

LETTERS

Who is city's audience?

After reading "New Brand" the article describing the Chamber of Commerce's new branding proposal, I have come to conclusion that the age and income selective theories behind the program is not reflective of Cannon Beach's residents or the merchants who focus on serving tourist, regardless of age or income. The philosophies and strategies, as defined by the chamber, must be examined and questioned by the City Council and residents who feel passionate about our exceptional Cannon Beach.

The chamber's new branding will be directed to "affluent millennials" as quoted in the Gazette's article: "attract a demographic of affluent millennial ... We have to appeal to a younger market."

Cannon Beach is not a place for "affluent millennial." It is place for every one of us who want to take a breath of the sea air, watch the surf, walk in a rain forest, find the right spot to take a photo of Terrible Tilly between the needle rocks, throw a ball for the dog, and find that there is still a place to be in the moment ... a moment in place of amazing natural beauty.

There is no argument that the chamber and the city need to adopt a single and repeated brand of wording, and artistic design for Cannon Beach activities. But please, make this marketing program about the place and people who care take and give our town it's flavor, not credit cards with a high limit and a certain age group. Cannon Beach deserves better. Cannon Beach deserves authentic.

**Lolly Champion
Cannon Beach**

Give full-time residents a breather

It is time that the Cannon Beach City Council and Chamber of Commerce consider the well-being of the people who live in our village full time.

The constant advertising of Cannon Beach continues to bring an influx of people no matter what day, week or month. Could we maybe see a down time and have the tranquility we once enjoyed during one month when no outside attraction is scheduled? This would also give the water and sewer systems a rest.

Cannon Beach does not need advertising. Haystack Rock is our advertiser, you can go almost anywhere in the world and people know about our Haystack Rock.

When I have people coming in my door offering to pay to park in my lower parking driveway, I know the village is on overload. This has often occurred when downtown parking is filled and Eighth and Ash streets have reached capacity.

The village is over-taxed by visitors. Please give the full-time residences a break and breather.

**Molly Edison
Cannon Beach**

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