



COLIN MURPHEY/THE DAILY ASTORIAN

The expansive gym at the Cannon Beach Elementary School currently sits unused.

School property comes with a tribal heritage

For sale: Abandoned 1950s wood-framed schoolhouse in tsunami inundation zone. On former site of historic Native American village; centrally located, ocean views. Serious offers only.

So might the ad for the former Cannon Beach Elementary School read when it goes on the market this year.

Former Seaside School District Superintendent Doug Dougherty proposed the school's closing in 2013, attributed to a \$1.5 million budget shortfall.

Located 15 feet above sea level — less than half the predicted 38-to-40-foot wave height expected in even a small tsunami, and more than a mile to high ground — sealed the school's fate.

A 2016 citywide survey showed 77 percent favored developing the former elementary school into a community center.

The Cannon Beach Chorus suggested a concert hall. The Haystack Rock Awareness Program expressed interest in an art and ecology center.

Other potential uses? Survey respondents imagined fairs, festivals, swap meets, a kayak launch or a beer garden. While uses are limited by the property's institutional zoning to a museum, educational or cultural activity, a conditional use permit could allow a parking lot, restroom or dog impound facility.

"Some may say, 'Why would you want to buy an old gym building?'" Mayor Sam Steidel, a longtime proponent of a city purchase of the property, said in January. "It used to be a very central part of the community. And it's the entrance to our town. People care about that, and I think there's been lots of efforts by citizens to say so."

Heritage site

The city's 2017 Parks and Trails Master Plan listed NeCus' Park and school site improvements a "high priority" to be accomplished within five years. The park holds "great importance to the community in terms of its locational, historical, cultural and ecological value," the plan stated.

For no one more than the people who lived here for centuries.

The former school sits on the former site of NeCus' village, a gathering point for tribes and central location for generations.

The Clatsops occupied "a unique pivot-point on the region's historical landscape," author and research professor Doug Deur, a tribal descendant, wrote in the Oregon Historical Quarterly.

The Clatsop and their villages lined the south bank of the Columbia River estuary while the Chinooks and their villages the north.

"From those homelands, these tribes dominated social and economic life at the mouth of the river through the early Northwest fur-trade era, as they had for countless generations prior," Deur wrote.

David Stowe, a representative of the Clatsop-Nehalem Federated Tribes, said there remains a "ton of interest," in the former school.

"The site was one of our most important village sites, and all of us on



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Signs that students once occupied classrooms remain five years after the Cannon Beach Elementary School shut down.

CANNON SHOTS

R.J. MARX



council and most of us in the tribe had family members born there, lived there and died there."

The culture stretches 15,000 to 20,000 years for Indian settlement in North America. "We say 'time immemorial.'"

Stowe's great-great-aunt and great-great-uncle were the last two Indian people to live there.

To say that the site has meaning for the tribe is "an understatement," he said.

Underground radar maps show underground longhouses, pit-houses and a trove of archaeological data remaining.

"One of the important things for us is to not disturb that," Stowe said. "We hope that the integrity of the site will be maintained and honored."

While interested in providing input, the tribe will not be among bidders.

"We had been trying to protect the site for a long time, but the logistics are challenging for a small group and we thought this was really a little more than we could take on," Stowe said.

What would he like to see at the school location?

"I'd love to see a longhouse, personally."

What it's worth

In September 2016, the land at the former school property was valued at \$450,000.

While most of the classrooms in the 1950s-era building would be unusable, Coaster Construction contractor John Nelson concluded the gym was in good condition. The cost of interior and exterior renovations, including a 25 percent contingency, was estimated at \$371,000.

The city and the school district were unable to come to an agreement during preliminary negotiations, and the project shifted to the backburner.

For the school district, the elemen-



DANNY MILLER/THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Carver of the welcome pole Guy Capoman speaks during the 2016 dedication at NeCus' Park in Cannon Beach.

tary school remains another piece in a budding North Coast real estate portfolio, along with Seaside High School, Broadway Middle School and Gearhart Elementary School.

In May, Sheila Roley, superintendent of the Seaside School District, said the district had received appraisals for replacement value of the building and property value if there were no building on it.

A third appraisal will offer "what would be a reasonable cost if you sold the building as is," Roley said.

"We're happy to talk to the city about any interest in the school," she added. "We haven't had any recent conversations, but we would love to have that building as a Cannon Beach community facility."

Steidel remains committed to a possible acquisition, but said interest from the City Council has waned.

"I'm the proponent, and I can't seem to get a council majority to be forthcoming or proactive," Steidel said. "They keep saying it's going to be too expensive and has too many problems. I don't think they're seeing the vision that it could be."

The mayor will have an ally in the tribal council.

"We're very much looking forward to participating with the planning and seeing how things develop there," Stowe said. "I have a feeling there can be a good outcome for everybody there. That would be awesome."

Eat apple pie, feel better

On Memorial Day, actual Memorial Day, I decided to bake an apple pie. What's more American than apple pie, I thought, thinking of the patriot holiday while standing in an aisle at Fresh Foods. I was in Cannon Beach, having just come from the Memorial Day observance on the Fir Street Bridge. I took what I believe to be an amazing photo of the man who so beautifully played taps.

My intention being to cook as little food as possible (come the warmer months, I prefer to assemble, not cook) I thought how to best use what's already in the house, which was a bag of apples. I'd bought the apples (organic) the week before with the intention of eating them all week for

lunch well smeared with peanut butter, but as it turned out Mr. Sax, which is what I call my husband, kept bringing

home sushi from Safeway and sometimes their fried chicken, and on the days when he didn't bring in food, I had yogurt. I'm partial to the Oui brand by Yoplait that comes in a tiny glass jar. They call it French-style yogurt. I call it dangerously addictive, but less dangerous than gelato. I had at home brown sugar, cinnamon, butter, and fancy sea salt. The only thing I didn't have and didn't feel like making was a pie crust. Luckily Fresh Foods carries the graham cracker and chocolate no-bake Keebler brand, so dinner, or a major part of dinner, was practically in the bag.

At Fresh Foods we also got a tin of Divina brand dolmas, aka stuffed grape leaves. I scooped up a head of hydroponically grown organic baby Bibb lettuce. Mr. Sax got some Lily's roasted garlic hummus and considered a jar of Jeff's Naturals garlic stuffed olives, but was advised we still had an unopened jar at home. My Gearhart friends who mostly shop at Costco tease me about our relatively bare cupboard and our commitment to not "stock up."

For years, Mr. Sax and I were guilty of being food pack rats, keeping stores, but ever since we moved across the country, we've decided to live lean and loose. This is probably unwise should there be a disaster — natural or otherwise — that makes it impossible to get to Fresh Foods. The exception to this "no stocking up" rule is one item only. There is always a bounty of dried prunes.

Now back to that apple pie. After checking out of the store (the guy at the register is very droll) and driving home and unloading our modest bag of groceries and eating leftover (one day only) Safeway sushi, I tackled the pie. For people who insist on recipes, sorry, there isn't any. The process involves cutting six very small organic apples into less-than-bite-size chunks; placing these apples into a small bowl and adding a half cup of brown sugar, several generous tablespoons of full fat butter (lately I'm preferring unsalted Kerry Gold), a dash of sea salt, several good shakes of good ground cinnamon, and stir that up. Tip this filling into the no-bake graham cracker crust and pouring a generous amount of pure maple syrup over the top. Cover the tin tightly with aluminum foil and pop into a 350-degree oven, the pie tin resting on a cookie pan. Go do something else like write this column for 45 minutes. Open oven, remove aluminum foil cover, and bake an additional 12 minutes. Remove from oven and allow time to cool.

Enjoy apple pie for dinner even though it's after Memorial Day and moving into berry season and all the apples are kind of old.

Eat apple pie. What could be more American?

VIEW FROM THE PORCH
EVE MARX



LETTERS

Please treat us fairly

Please grant us your permission to restore our former views. We don't see what the city gains by insisting that we lose.

From our deck we used to see Haystack, beach and surf. Now all we see is sky, a wall of dune and turf.

What makes the top 10 feet of dune so sacred it must stay? What would the city lose? We're not asking it to pay.

Two of my three grandkids are too small to climb the dune. The extra height I carry them cannot be cut too soon.

Please treat us like good neighbors, which we believe we are. Not like some nuisance nemesis punished from afar.

I explained the situation to my grandson who is six. He said he didn't think the problem should be that hard to fix.

He said, "Tell the City Council to think and do what's fair." So, all I ask of Cannon Beach is to treat us fair and square.

David Dornbusch
Oakland, California

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