

New public works director chosen in Cannon Beach

La Bonte has served as interim

By Brenna Visser
Cannon Beach Gazette

Karen La Bonte has been named the new public works director of Cannon Beach.

La Bonte started with the city as assistant public works director in September, but has been serving as the interim director since her predecessor, Jim Arndt, retired in March.

She was chosen out of a pool of five other candidates, City Manager Bruce St. Denis said.

"Karen has served as interim public works director with distinction and has guided the department through some difficult times," St. Denis wrote in a statement. "I have watched her



BRENNA VISSER/THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Karen La Bonte has been named the new public works director in Cannon Beach.

work with staff and citizens and am impressed with both her interpersonal skills and energy."

Before coming to Cannon Beach, La Bonte worked at Verizon Communications for 30 years as Engineering Direc-

tor, facilitating project planning and construction across the country. After retiring in 2006, La Bonte decided to pursue winemaking and bought Trio Vintners winery in Walla Walla, Washington. But after facing

some health issues, she closed the winery and decided to retire again in her favorite vacation town of 22 years: Cannon Beach.

"I've always considered it my decompression place," she said. "It's where I always thought I would come to retire."

But less than year after the move, La Bonte decided retirement "just didn't fit" her, and applied for the assistant director position.

"It just felt like a good fit. After meeting Jim and the rest of the staff it felt like home," she said.

La Bonte said as director she hopes to continue to build a strong network between the city, residents and business owners.

"I just hope to make a positive impact," she said.

George Vetter not seeking re-election

Cannon Beach city councilor was appointed in 2012

By Brenna Visser
Cannon Beach Gazette

relationship between the chamber of commerce and the city.

"The relationship between the city and chamber and business community has become much more of a partnership — as it should be.

George Vetter will not run for another term on the Cannon Beach City Council.

Vetter was appointed to the council in 2012 before being elected in 2014. He said he is not seeking re-election because he plans to spend more time out of town, making balancing his travel and a rigid meeting schedule more difficult.

"I don't want to be committed to be here if it's not convenient," Vetter said.

He also said that "it wouldn't hurt to have new blood on the council."

Before running for City Council, Vetter served on a number of city committees in his 40-year tenure in Cannon Beach.

As a business owner, Vetter said one of the highlights of his term was playing a part in mending a tenuous



George Vetter

While he plans to spend more time at his other home in Bend, Vetter said he is still invested in Cannon Beach and intends to stay involved.

"Whoever is next, I hope it will be someone with a good foundation in Cannon Beach ... someone who understands the town," he said.

Vetter's seat is one of three council positions that will be on the ballot in November. The filing period for city candidates opens May 30.

Cannon Beach may add emergency manager, code enforcement officer

Budget from Page 1A

The \$113,000 cost is offset by money the city has already budgeted for an emergency consultant and lower-level emergency part-time position, a difference of about \$39,000.

Code enforcement

According to the budget message, the budget increase is \$3.16 million.

After budget adoption on May 23, that number was slightly higher. New staff positions and increased water rates, wastewater and utility rates are the primary source of the increase, approved by city councilors in March to help cover infrastructure maintenance costs.

A code enforcement officer, also a new position, is budgeted at about \$106,000.

Currently, Cannon Beach staff have a hard time keeping up with the number of planning



FILE PHOTO

Cannon Beach City Hall.

and design codes that need to be enforced, St. Denis said at a budget committee meeting. Enforcement includes managing both short-term and long-term rental enforcement. "The community has high standards,

but we don't have the staff to do the follow up on maintaining those standards."

Funding changes between the city and the Chamber of Commerce were also resolved. In May, the city proposed a

decrease in funding for the Visitors Center, only funding \$40,000 of the \$160,000 total it takes to operate. The city, which has fully funded the center in the past, asked the chamber to cover the remaining \$120,000 with lodging tax dollars.

Chamber officials argued the change would cut into the chamber's promotion program, which is financed by the lodging tax. The two entities agreed to split the cost of the Visitors Center, with each paying \$80,000 next year.

Other budget highlights:

- Transient room taxes are projected to increase by \$288,004 or 7 percent over 2017-18 budget amounts.

- \$100,000 has been set aside digitizing city hall records as a back-up in the event of an emergency.

- \$50,000 has been set aside for a preliminary site study for a new city hall.

Cannon Beach city attorney steps down

By Brenna Visser
Cannon Beach Gazette

Cannon Beach City Attorney Tammy Herdener has announced her resignation, citing her desire for a career change and to spend more time with family.

Herdener, who has worked for the city since 2007, will be leaving this July to invest more time as a professor at American

Public University, a job she has held with the online institution since 2003.

Living in Portland, Herdener also said balancing commutes to Cannon Beach with family time was getting more difficult. "This is a part



Tammy Herdener

of a larger career change I've wanted to do," Herdener said. "I want to focus more on my students and my family."

During her time in Cannon Beach, Herdener oversaw transitions between three city managers, helped navigate local marijuana ordinance changes after legalization and played an integral role in the purchase of the 800-acre Ecola Creek Forest Reserve.

Herdener said she is grateful for her time in Cannon Beach, and looks fondly upon her memories with numerous city councilors and staff.

"This job has been interesting and challenging. I'm leaving only on the most positive of terms and feelings," she said.

The city has posted the job opening and hopes to hire a new attorney by the end of June.

North Coast benefits from international tourism

Spike in foreign travel due to marketing, visa changes

By Brenna Visser
Cannon Beach Gazette

Oregon is seeing more international tourists than ever before, and recent projections don't show any signs of the trend stopping.

In 2017, the state had more than 1.1 million foreign visitors, up 11 percent from 2012. The state collected about \$1.3 billion in international spending, up 18 percent from five years ago, according to a report from Tourism Economics, a tourism consulting and research firm.

The Oregon Coast receives about \$113 million of those international tourism dollars, falling third in line behind Portland and the Willamette Valley.

Oregon is on track to be the sixth fastest-growing state for international tourism, with analysts projecting up to 23 percent growth in foreign visitors through 2022.

So what is bringing people to Oregon?

"Part of the big draw for international visitors is who we are. They hear about the beauty

of this place, the amazing culinary scene, our fresh seafood, what's being done with our wine and craft beer industries," said Todd Davidson, the CEO of Travel Oregon, the state agency that promotes tourism.

"What we're doing in Oregon is working. Yes, we've been more aggressive in the international market than ever before, but we couldn't do it without all of our Oregon businesses and partners."

Shifting demographics

There are many factors that contribute to the boom of foreign visitors.

Over the past few years, the number of international flights into Portland has opened the door to countries that otherwise would have never had a convenient way to visit the Pacific Northwest. Partnerships with national marketing organizations like Brand USA have allowed the state to "penetrate markets they wouldn't have even dreamed of a decade ago," Davidson said.

But one of the biggest changes to the Oregon tourism landscape has been a significant shift in the number of visitors from Asian countries. Canada has historically accounted for about half of all

international tourists and contributes to about one quarter of all international spending.

In 2017, travelers from countries like China, South Korea and Japan comprised a quarter of all of Oregon's international visitors, but brought in more than \$241 million in travel revenue — more than 43 percent of all international spending.

"We know (Oregon) is not necessarily the first destination that comes to mind when people want to come to the U.S. They are going for other destinations, like California or Florida, they've seen in TV or movies," Davidson said.

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