

New housing goal is to focus on deed-restricted rentals

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The incentives would have only applied if a developer agreed to put a deed restriction on a project that would forbid the units from ever turning into vacation rentals or condominiums. The two argued the changes would remove roadblocks from developers looking to build affordable housing, as they help drive construction costs down, which would in turn keep rents lower.

But in April the majority of the City Council disagreed, arguing that the changes in no way guaranteed that rents would be affordable and instead would have led to developers tearing down and rebuilding single-family homes to rent at market prices in the residential zone.



FILE PHOTO

A design option for affordable housing in Cannon Beach from 2016.

At the urging of Mayor Sam Steidel and City Councilor Brandon Ogilvie, who both voted for the original package, the city is considering a scaled-back version of the amendments. The new goal is to refocus on encouraging development of deed-restricted long-term rentals.

"I feel there is a need for long-term housing across all strata," Ogilvie said.

Under the new proposal, the deed restriction is kept. Parking requirements would still be reduced and height restrictions for multifamily dwellings would still be increased from 28 feet to 32 feet to match the

current standard for hotels — but only for properties in the limited commercial zone. Because multifamily housing is a conditional use in this zone, the Planning Commission would still have discretion to approve or deny variances related to parking and height on a case-by-case basis.

With almost 90 percent of commercial land already developed in Cannon Beach, limiting changes to this zone would be a relatively low-risk way to experiment with new regulations, City Planner Mark Barnes said.

"It's not identical to workforce housing, but broadly in the rental market, this kind of housing is not made or marketed for the upper market," Barnes said.

While City Councilors Nancy McCarthy and George

Vetter both recognized the need for long-term housing, they remain lukewarm on the changes. McCarthy said she still takes issue with the fact the proposal has no way to guarantee rents on deed-restricted properties would stay affordable, which is ultimately the problem the council set out to address.

Vetter agreed, adding that it is a gamble to possibly loosen standards for a developer that may not build housing that is accessible to workers and year-round residents.

"(Developers) are going to rent out units at the highest value they can," Vetter said. "Our best hope is another employer in town who wants to build employee housing sees this and says, 'I could make this work now.'"

Steidel urged the council to

see the amendments as a framework they could build upon in the future to incentivize affordable projects. Without some regulatory shifts, Steidel said, the city won't get developers even interested in coming to the table.

"For a developer, these changes could make a project pencil out," the mayor said.

Councilor Mike Benefield, who voted against the original package, said he is willing to try the changes in the commercial zone, since it would not impact the majority of residential areas.

But the council needs to call it what it is, he said.

"Let's stop calling it affordable housing amendments. I don't see this as affordable housing — this is long-term housing," Benefield said. "We still need a long-term effort to address affordable housing."

Firefighters get to meet people they help

Firefighters from Page 1A

Over the next four days, the main work for the task force was to patrol for spot fires and protect homes by clearing out surrounding brush and wetting down yards and rooftops.

But during the night of Aug. 2, the task force was sent out to a road that turned out to be one of the main fronts of the now-contained 20,000 acre fire. Spencer remembers all the firefighters falling silent, as everyone started to pull line and prepare for the flames creeping forward 200 yards away. Eventually, the wind shifted in their favor.

"We don't normally end up right in front of the flame front," Spencer said. "It's a very surreal experience to have flames shooting up over the tree line at you."

One of the most rewarding aspects of the job is getting to meet the people you are serving, Savage said. In Dufur, much of what was being protected was farmland, and firefighters were often working side by side with ranchers.

"They don't have a bunch of rules and standards to follow like we do. They are just kind of winging it with their own equipment," Savage said. "It was amazing to see them risk their own work trucks and lives to help out their neighbors."

Though the days and nights are long, often ending only in a few hours of sleep in a tent, what makes going on trips difficult is rarely the firefighting itself.

For James Hutchinson, of the Gearhart Volunteer Fire Department, watching someone's cash crop singe into black dust was often a humbling and somber experience.

"I remember on one fire someone came up to me and asked to use my phone to call home. Their phone wasn't working and they needed to let someone know the farm was gone," Hutchinson said. "In those moments you take a step into their shoes, and it can be hard. But you have to make it a motivation and remember you are there to help."

Gearhart Fire Lt. Josh Como, who has been deployed three times, said leaving home can be difficult. Finding employers who are flexible enough to allow unplanned deployments, as well as balancing family dynamics, can be a challenge.

"Life goes on while you



JOSH COMO

Ron Britton, left, works in the smoky haze of the South Valley Fire on Aug. 2.

'I remember on one fire someone came up to me and asked to use my phone to call home. Their phone wasn't working and they needed to let someone know the farm was gone. In those moments you take a step into their shoes, and it can be hard. But you have to make it a motivation and remember you are there to help.'

James Hutchinson,
of the Gearhart Volunteer Fire Department

are out there," Como said. "Everything is going on at home, plus the people you love are worrying about whether you're OK. That's why it's important to take lots of photos to let them know you're safe."

But the challenges are overshadowed by what everyone agreed was the best part of the job: gratitude.

"You see these things happen on TV, but until you're actually there, meeting the people you're helping face to face ... that kind of gratitude you can't understand or see unless you're there."

A new reality

With conflagration calls on the rise, local fire departments are adjusting to a new reality. Every request from the state means a local chief is making a judgment call on whether the department can afford to lose personnel — often at the height of the summer tourism season, when first responders are the busiest.

"The biggest challenge is making sure that when we send crews out we're making

sure there's enough crew to respond to our own emergencies," Lewis and Clark Fire Chief Jeff Golightly said.

Fire departments have yet to face any issues answering emergency calls, as they all have an interagency agreement to help each other. But whether the department has enough people available is something Gearhart Fire Chief Bill Eddy always has on his mind.

"That's always a concern with a volunteer department. In a volunteer department you have no way to backfill when people go," Eddy said. "You just plan, train and prepare the best you can."

Fire departments have also had to adjust how they budget as the costs of conflagration continues to rise. While the state reimburses local departments, local departments have to be ready to foot the bill ahead of time — some now even creating

a line item in the budget in anticipation. Some departments, like Gearhart, are still waiting on some portions of reimbursement for work done at the California fires, and have had to request temporary general fund transfers to make it through.

Golightly estimates more than half a million dollars was paid out to Clatsop County departments last year.

While there may be some inconvenience, Cannon Beach Fire Chief Matt Benedict thinks the connections and skills volunteers bring back from these trips make the county more prepared.

"A lot of the citizens are thanking us for helping out, and offering to be there for us if we ever need help," Benedict said. "I love getting to send people out. You don't get to use all those skills you train for until you're out there."

Cleanup event got 'huge response from our employees'

Plastics from Page 1A

"We believe social responsibility as a commercial entity is very important," Wolfington said. "The other part of it is that our employees, they come here to Cannon Beach. They do a lot of day trips here ... We're not just helping Cannon Beach, but our employee family."

Wolfington said the company met Sea Turtles Forever at their annual weeklong Earth Day fair, where they saw the buckets of plastics the team had already removed from previous cleanups. With 35 nieces and nephews herself, Wolfington couldn't help but think about them and other children who play in that sand and how putting contaminated plastics in their mouth could affect them.

Professional Affairs Manager Sharon Sipprell also felt compelled to help after seeing the group's demonstration.

"I'm a native Oregonian and I've watched the beach change over the years. There is more garbage and fewer birds, seals and even shells than I saw as a kid," she said. "This event has gotten a huge response from our employees and I think it's because we all want to do something that's going to make a difference, even if it's a small impact on a much larger problem."

Although their day at the beach came to a close, the company volunteered to donate video services to help Sea Turtles Forever develop some content to promote on social media.

"We want to help them get the word out," Wolfington said.

Fire danger shuts Ecola Creek Reserve to public

Public will be notified when conditions are safe for go in

Cannon Beach Gazette

The Ecola Creek Forest Reserve has been closed to public entry. Cannon Beach City Manager Bruce St. Denis announced the closure Tuesday because of high fire danger. A statement will be released once conditions are safe enough for public entry.

The forest reserve typically closes this time of year. The city often times closures with Greenwood Resources, the company who manages neighboring timber properties.

"They do a lot more forest management than we do, so they are very knowledgeable about assessing this," St. Denis said. "So we rely on them as a partner."

The reserve will be reopened when the city deems there has been enough consistent rainfall to reduce fire danger.

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