Local governments approve enterprise zone expansion

Designation to benefit outside industries

By Jack Heffernan The Daily Astorian

Clatsop County has approved expanding the Clatsop Enterprise Zone to include most of the Astoria waterfront, representing the final nod needed for the idea.

Commissioners voted unanimously Sept. 26 to approve the expansion, following Astoria, the Port of Astoria and Warrenton. The expansion will also include portions of downtown Astoria, the Port's main waterfront, the East Mooring Basin and parts of the Youngs Bay waterfront.

Astoria rejected the enterprise zone in 2015 over

qualms about partnering with the Port. City councilors reconsidered this year, while excluding hotels, motels and destination resorts from the tax incentive.

The shift came after a March presentation from Hyak Maritime CEO Robert Dorn. The enterprise zone will now feature industrial docks at North Tongue Point owned by the tug and barge building company, which plans to develop a maritime repair and fabrication center.

The enterprise zone offers three- to five-year tax breaks on improvements from eligible development projects. Enterprise zones are intended to attract businesses to areas experiencing economic hardship.

The primary beneficiaries will be manufacturers and other types of industries that are

'The businesses currently operating in Astoria have not been given the same kind of support to expand and succeed, why are new businesses more deserving?'

Sunset Empire Transportation District board in a letter to the commissioners

rare to the area, said Kevin Leahy, executive director of Clatsop Economic Development Resources.

"We just want to show in this discussion that this is a business-friendly community," Leahy said.

In a letter handed to commissioners, the Sunset Empire Transportation District board expressed concerns about the expansion, citing possible traffic issues, a housing crunch and a lack of available workers.

"The businesses currently operating in Astoria have not been given the same kind of support to expand and succeed, why are new businesses more deserving?" the letter asked.

In other business Wednesday, commissioners:

• Took possession of a foreclosed Jeffers Garden property on G Road about a year ahead of schedule. The property was foreclosed in October, and the owners had two years to keep the property under state law. But officials cited various sanitary and safety issues — including a lack of plumbing, water and electricity on the property that has often sheltered large amounts of people — as a reason to take possession earlier than expected. After a first-of-its kind hearing for the county earlier this month, commissioners directed staff to begin the process of taking it over.

The owner, Scott Wood, has 30 days to vacate the land.

• Accepted the deed to the property that holds the now-shuttered North Coast Youth Correctional Facility.

The state has owned the land, with an estimated value of \$12.1 million, since 1996 and was required to hand the property back to the county after the closure. A \$20 million bond in the November election would, if passed, remodel

But officials cited various the facility into a new county nitary and safety issues — jail.

 Appointed Brittany Bodway Israel, who owns the Dairy Queen on West Marine Drive, to the county Fair Board.

She will serve the remainder of the term vacated by Paul Mitchell, who resigned earlier this year. The term runs through 2019.

• Agreed to purchase a roughly \$400,000 Gradall excavator for the county Public Works Department.

An excavator is a specialized machine used to dig ditches and perform other functions like debris removal, bridge work and culvert installation. The department has a 15-year-old machine that is experiencing many mechanical failures, wrote Ted McLean, assistant public works director, in an agenda item summary.

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FILE PHOTO

The Tolovana Arts Colony debuted 50 years ago. It is believed that a copy of this 1968 edition of the Seaside Signal will be included when a time capsule is unveiled.

City seeks to unearth buried time capsule

An unveiling scheduled this fall at Tolovana Arts Colony

By Brenna Visser Cannon Beach Gazette

This fall, the city hopes to unearth a time capsule they believe was buried 50 years ago near the Tolovana Arts Colony.

But what will they find?
"We're not sure what to
expect," Public Works Director Karen La Bonte said.
"But we're willing to take a
chance."

This summer, the city received a call from a citizen who said 50 years ago he was a part of a gentleman's club that buried a time capsule. After some digging, an article marking the moment on Nov. 7, 1968, was found in the Seaside Signal.

The time capsule was in commemoration of the dedication of the Tolovana Community Hall, and should contain a copy of the Seaside Signal, a page from McCall's magazine about food and fashion, as well as photos of a Boeing 737, the latest women's hair-dos and a view of Tolovana State Park.

Questions remain, however, about the existence of the time capsule and whether or not it remains without deterioration today. So far, the city has yet to find anyone else in the community who remembers the burial, and has not been able to identify or locate the original caller.

Either way, it's a risk the city is willing to take, City Manager Bruce St. Denis said. The city is now looking for donations from residents for a new capsule to buried in the same location until Oct. 15. Any item that represents Cannon Beach in 2018 is welcomed — the size of the vessel will be decided based on the amount of items, La Bonte said

A date has yet to be set for the unveiling.

Benefield, Risley and Swedenborg seek election to two open City Council seats

Candidates from Page 1A

At the crux is a lack of affordable housing, Benefield said. It's an issue the council attempted to tackle a few times during his last term. Plans to introduce park model homes at the city's RV park have been stalled amid city staff turnover. The council, including Benefield, voted down zoning code amendments pitched as a way to encourage workforce housing, finding them ineffective at building housing the average worker could afford.

"I don't have a clear answer. I think we're in that holding pattern because we don't have the answers," Benefield said. "But I don't think it's just the city's problem."

If elected to another term, Benefield would support directing lodging tax dollars away from promotion efforts and putting the money into public art, building trails and buying the former Cannon Beach Elementary School as an event center.

While in favor of the chamber's efforts to market during the offseason, he questions its effectiveness in driving tourism away from summer months.

"People are going to see the promotion and come when they want, which is summer," Benefield said. "It's just too crowded."

A listening ear

While this is her first bid for City Council, Risley is no stranger to local politics. Over the course of three decades, she has served on several boards and committees, including the Cannon Beach and Clatsop County planning commissions, the Oregon State Parks and Recreation Commission and the chamber board.

As a member of public art committees, supporting the town's art identity and legacy would be a priority for Risley. Other goals include working more collaboratively with the chamber and exploring solutions for a new City Hall. As a member of the parks committee, preserving the integrity of the Ecola Creek Forest Reserve would also be on her agenda.

As a former chamber board member, Risley sees the value in promoting Cannon Beach to tourists, but as a councilor she would work with the state to try and expand what projects can be funded through the lodging tax.

"We've got quite a bit in

the coffers, but we're stuck with a formula on how to spend it," she said. "I think when a good thing gets too good you need to rethink, and that's why I'm talking about the Legislature."

If elected, Risley's

main goal would be to be a sounding board for her constituents.

"I love this place because there's a spirit of independence and cooperation with each other," she said.

"When we work together we can accomplish so much, so I want to hear what's on your mind."

Finding a balance

For his first bid for public office, Swedenborg hopes to be a voice for people busy running businesses and raising families — a cross section of the community he feels often isn't well-represented.

Born and raised in Cannon Beach, Swedenborg worked in Los Angeles and Bend in technology sales and management with Hewlett-Packard before moving back to the area to take over operations at The Waves Oceanfront Lodging.

Remembering the small and sleepy Cannon Beach of his childhood, in conjunction with the reality of a booming tourism industry today, is what inspired his campaign slogan: "Manage the future, respect the past."

"I think we really need to look at the character balance of Cannon Beach. Create policy that allows for some change and also will help create balance by allowing younger families to live here and work here," he said.

Creating that balance includes supporting paid parking and a food and beverage tax to help bring in revenue that, unlike the lodging tax, wouldn't be restricted to mostly tourism purposes.

Swedenborg is the strongest advocate for tourism promotion in the offseason out of the candidates, and argues that, in comparison with other tourism-based cities, the amount spent on promotion is small.

"I do feel Cannon Beach has to have some kind of promotion," he said. "The only way we're going to grow the transient lodging dollars we use to run the city is by growing business in the shoulder season."

Swedenborg suggests a

better way to manage lodging tax dollars diverted to the Tourism and Arts Commission and the Chamber

of Commerce destination marketing budget would be to lump it

all into one fund and have it be managed by an oversight committee that would vote on how the money should be

used.

"I think the way we do it today there are lots of duplicate efforts. The city gives money to one event in town, and then the city gives money to the chamber and they use some of that money to market that same event. I think there are some synergies to be gained by looking at how that is managed at a city level," he said.

Different approaches

While all of the candidates listed housing as a top priority, their approach to address it differed. All of the candidates said employers should do more to develop housing for workers.

As a business owner, Swedenborg is directly impacted by the employee shortage related to the lack of workforce housing, and has had to provide lodging on a small scale for employees for years, he said.

Benefield said the city should move forward with the park model project and incentivize accessory dwelling units. He also believes regulating vacation rentals is a way to begin addressing the housing shortage. He supports a proposal about to go before the Planning Commission that would eliminate the five-year rental permit that allows some homeowners nightly rentals.

"Our volunteer base is disappearing. Because of higher costs, young people are moving out, and the older folks are getting tired. The young people who are here are working two to three jobs," Benefield said. "We've displaced our younger families

with tourists. We need people invested in the community, not just their properties." Risley believes her real es-

tate background gives her key insights into the complex realities of building costs, zoning and other housing issues, she said. She joins Benefield in supporting more accessory dwelling units in limited areas, but believes the place to start is to crack down on unlicensed properties and make sure lodging taxes are collected.

"Things have changed in real estate. People buying these expensive homes don't need any other income," Risley said. "I don't see people opening up these properties for workforce housing."

Establishing emergency services at South Wind is also a priority for the candidates, though each differ on what development should be prioritized.

In a place where land is at a premium, Swedenborg and Benefield both advocate using a portion of South Wind property for workforce housing.

Risley, however, said her primary vision for the land is to relocate the Cannon Beach Academy, a charter school.

"I think everyone is expecting to see us put a school on this property," she said.

As discussions of development unfold, the issue of whether the city should financially get involved with financing a school building has split the City Council. Benefield believes the city should not take on the cost of building any part of a school building, as he feels the financial burden is the responsibility of

Seaside School District.

Risley and Swedenborg, however, would be willing to direct some city resources into building a dual-purpose structure that could be a school as well as a supplies storage and evacuation area, seeing it as an investment in the youth and the city.

The campaign is competitive but peaceful, with candidates describing it so far as a race between three people who all love Cannon Beach. No matter their disagreements, there's a certain unspoken rule to stay friendly in a town of 1,700 people, Benefield said.

"Because no matter what, you'll end up running into them at the coffee shop the next day," he said.

Report: Disparity in drug convictions has declined

Early results from new law

By Paris Achen Capital Bureau

SALEM — A disparity in the rate of drug possession convictions between blacks and whites has declined dramatically as a result of an anti-racial profiling law that took effect over a year ago, accord-

The new law reduced from felonies to misdemeanors crimes for possessing personal use amounts of six drugs.

ing to a report by the Oregon

Criminal Justice Commission.

A state task force earlier found that Oregon blacks were disproportionately being convicted of drug felonies for having small amounts.

"I am proud to report what appear to be positive signs that this legislation is working as intended," Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum said in testimony Wednesday. She said the law — House Bill 2355 — "made significant inroads" in reducing racial disparities and reducing the number of all Or-

egonians convicted of felonies for minor amounts of drugs.

"This reflects the belief of the majority of our task force that addiction cannot be addressed through punishment alone and that a conviction with the potential to take away a person's employment and housing leaves them poorly situated to overcome that addiction," she said. The report found that the number of drug-related felony convictions decreased by 2,000 in one year, a reduction of about 40 percent. That doesn't mean they escaped prosecution entirely. Drug-related misdemeanors in the same time increased from 224 to 1,443.

The disparity in drug possession convictions between blacks and whites declined by 80 percent, according to the report. In 2016-17, whites accounted for 83 percent of drug possession convictions, even though they make up 85 percent of the population, while blacks accounted for 3.6 percent of those convictions while they are 1.9 percent of the population. The following year, that fell to 2.9 percent, while the percentage of conviction of whites remained the same.



