

South Wind: Project is more costly than anticipated

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adding “the potential of tens of millions of dollars” on top of the \$27 million estimate, said Lisa Patterson, an SRG architect.

“It’s bad. We have to mitigate through it,” Patterson said.

The report is shedding new light on the financial and logistical realities of South Wind.

“I’m struggling with why we would still contemplate South Wind after seeing those kinds of numbers and hearing these kinds of risks, even though it gets us out of the extra-large tsunami range,” City Councilor Mike Benefield said. “Are you willing to spend \$15 million more for an area that may be out of the tsunami range but may slide down the hill in the end? The geology there seems much worse than I ever envisioned.”

An emergency building

Conversations about replacing City Hall resurfaced earlier this year at the urging of City Manager Bruce St. Denis, who had concerns about how the existing building would fare in a tsunami or earthquake.

“It was never meant to be an emergency building,” St. Denis said.

The idea is for the city to have a more suitable emergency operations center, with the majority of the expansion going into mak-

HIGH PRICE TAG

The high price tag is largely because of the significant work engineers believe will need to be done to offset landslide risks.

ing a more robust police station. But so far, most of the City Council is feeling considerable sticker shock and doubts voters would pass an expensive bond measure.

“I have my reservations about South Wind,” City Councilor Nancy McCarthy said. “Sounds like one hole digging into another hole, so to speak. It just seems like way too much money to be studying South Wind as a City Hall site.”

The new assessment made Benefield question what kind of development could be considered at South Wind. The Cannon Beach Academy, a charter school, opened last year, in part to fill the void left by the closing of the Cannon Beach Elementary School in 2013 over tsunami concerns. The city initially pursued South Wind as the site for an elementary school.

“I know (Mayor Sam Steidel’s) view is not just to build a City Hall and a police station, but I can’t imagine the charter school and their sponsors and supporters spending the money to build a school on a risky site,” he said.

City Councilor George Vetter, who has been the

most supportive of building City Hall at South Wind, wants more information before making a decision.

“This is our first opportunity to do something there,” Vetter said. “Are (residents) going to vote for a City Hall that will be impacted by tsunami anyway?”

Different scopes

Part of the surprise came from the fact initial assessments done on South Wind showed it was “generally a good place to build,” with relatively little landslide risk in the area proposed for development, said Tom Horning, who did the geotechnical testing for the city in 2013 prior to the sale.

The nature of what Horning was asked to study, however, is different than doing geotechnical work for a specific site. The objective five years ago was to do a quick, surface-level evaluation of the property to see if it was generally developable and justified to purchase. Costs to do what is necessary to make development happen was not part of the original inquiry.

It is also possible a more in-depth analysis of deeper borings into the soil could

reveal new insights not available at the time. Without seeing a completed geotechnical report, Horning can’t comment on what may differ from today’s analysis versus his five years ago. But it’s possible the three layers of woody debris geologists are interpreting as landslides could actually be entombed forests that were killed by suddenly deeper swamp waters from subsidence during great earthquakes.

“Those peat layers, in other words, are 80,000-year-old ghost forests,” said Horning, a geologist who serves on the Seaside City Council.

What the area was being analyzed for is also important, said Mark Morgans, of Greenwood Resources, who helped with the sale. The goal was property that would be considered safer relative to the former Cannon Beach Elementary School’s location on Spruce Street.

“Our intent was to sell a big enough footprint for an elementary school that would service Cannon Beach, and on that area at least 10 percent of it would be safe and geologically stable enough to build that facility,” Morgans said. “It’s much safer than where (the former school) is, but now we’re talking main city infrastructure. That’s a different level of risk and exposure.”



Brenna Visser/Cannon Beach Gazettee

Students from Cannon Beach Academy glue marine plastics to a mural of a sea star.

Academy: Budget woes make future uncertain

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focused on getting our pledges so this won’t happen.”

The charter school has struggled since its inception. The effort to open it began after Cannon Beach Elementary School was shuttered in 2013 due to financial issues and tsunami safety concerns.

After securing a charter through the Seaside School District in 2016, the academy had to find a new location four months before opening for the 2017-2018 school year. A cost estimate for the new location came in \$150,000 over what was budgeted for construction at the original location on Sunset Boulevard.

While the academy was able to secure a home at the former children’s center building, first-year enrollment was lower than anticipated. Fredrickson has attributed the enrollment challenge to the perception that the school’s status was “up in the air” during the last-minute location change. Confusion about the fact the school is tuition-free and not a private school also played a part.

The academy faced lower than expected enrollment again this school year, falling 17 students

short of its 50-student goal. Having fewer students ultimately impacts how much funding the charter school receives from the Seaside School District.

Doubts

Pledges could also be stalling because of doubts some people in the community have about the academy’s sustainability.

One major donor, who has remained anonymous, has told the board they will not give their \$33,000 pledge until the school proves it can make it through two full years.

Because of how long it took the academy to open its doors, the loss of some momentum from initial donors could be contributing to the problem, Fredrickson said.

“Some of these pledges were made so long ago. The amount of time that went by between the pledge being made versus when we’re asking for our money may have impacted this, as well,” she said.

In the short term, the board hopes to solidify a fundraising committee in January and collect as many pledges as possible.

“We can’t be complacent. We can’t be passive anymore,” John Molyneux, a board member, said.

Tilly: Rekate one of a few to go into ‘Terrible Tilly’

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In the late 1970s, Rekate was one of the many dory fishermen circling the famous lighthouse in search of a good Chinook salmon run. He was one of a handful who made it into “Terrible Tilly” after it was decommissioned and before it became a columbarium in 1980.

Other than a few photos, the experience mostly fell out of his memory until a few weeks ago, when he read a story about a man who discovered copies of the original schematics for the lighthouse in his Warrenton home.

Rekate, a retired Cannon Beach contractor, now plans to offer his photos to the Cannon Beach History Center and Museum to help piece together the lighthouse’s history.

“When I read that article, I thought, ‘Hey, maybe they could use these, too,’” he said.

Local lore

Lots of local lore exists about fishermen taking trips into the lighthouse, but photos documenting the interior or taken from the perspective of being on the lighthouse are uncommon, according to the history center.

While the abandoned lighthouse was always in the background, it wasn’t especially common for fishermen to get onto the sea stack, Rekate recalled. There is no good way to dock a boat, and the area is known for its tumultuous conditions.

But one day, when fishing was unusually slow and the water was strangely placid, Rekate and a few other fishermen decided to take a look inside.

Getting there, however, was still a challenge. Rekate and his partners took turns jumping onto the island while the others would putter around.

“Even though it was calm, there was still a swell, so you’d have to time it,” he said. “You’d move in with the swell and the person going would jump, then you’d have to hit reverse and back out.”

When he first arrived at the lighthouse, the front door was flung open and the insides were in disarray.

The building was incredibly dark, Rekate remembered, illuminated only by the light from the front door and from the lighthouse above. Some chairs

and a table remained — even a 1950s newspaper from Tampa, Florida. Inside where the Fresnel lens used to live, little holes from small rocks carried by large waves punctured the glass.

What impressed him the most, however, was the staircase.

“The catwalks were very unique,” Rekate said.

“Light from the lighthouse would hit down on diamond-shaped Fresnel pieces on the staircase and illuminate the whole staircase without any lights. I thought that was pretty cool.”

Still curious

Rekate remains curious about the state of the light-

house almost 40 years later, and of the other fishermen who made the journey.

“If there was any kind of major swell, you’d bash into the rocks,” he said. “So I can’t imagine it happened a lot.”

Many who remember Terrible Tilly have “likely been blown apart across the country by now,” he said.

Dear HEART

You can try, but you can't quit me. Providence has made sure of that for 55 years and counting.

Staying the course, Bob

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