

Elks get no break on maintenance assessment

Council opts to keep the status quo for 2015-16

By Katherine Lacaze
Seaside Signal

The Seaside Elks will get no relief from the mandatory Downtown Maintenance District Assessment in 2015-16, but Seaside City Council promised to re-evaluate all properties included in the assessment during the summer.

At the City Council's March 9 meeting, Christian Zupancic, a local lawyer who spoke on behalf of the Elks, asked City Council for a reduced rate or relief from the assessment all together for the nonprofit. At last week's meeting, the council voted unanimously to keep the status quo for fiscal year 2015-16 but to further explore the topic at an August meeting.

The Downtown Maintenance District includes businesses from Roosevelt Drive to the Promenade that are located along Broadway, Avenue A, Avenue B, Columbia Street and Franklin Street. Businesses affected are charged based on their lot's frontage feet.

The dollar-per-front-foot rate, according to the city's Administrative Assistant Kim Jordan, is based on two contracts the city pays out for downtown landscaping and litter removal.

"These contractors keep the downtown landscape looking beautiful and the litter picked up in the downtown area," said Jordan.

For 2014-15, nearly 170 lots were assessed at a rate of about \$8.84 per front foot to generate \$92,051. The Seaside Elks Lodge, which has two large parking lots along Avenue A, was required to pay \$1,038.19 for 117.4 feet of frontage for one lot and \$1,436.12 for 162.4 feet of frontage for another lot.

After it's completed, the assessment is sent to the county, which adds the fees

to the property owners' Clatsop County taxes for the year.

The assessment for the upcoming fiscal year started late last month when the city sent letters to property owners. They will have 30 days to provide comment or feedback before the City Council is presented with an ordinance for first and second reading at its April 27 meeting. The ordinance likely will come back before council for a third and final reading, and adoption, at its May 11 meeting.

Earlier this month, when speaking on behalf of the Elks, Zupancic explained how the Elks is a nonprofit organization and typically exempt from property taxes, although the assessment is distinct from a tax. The organization donates more than \$35,000 per year in scholarships for high school seniors and other community programs and events, such as eye clinics for children, camps for speech- or hearing-impaired children and more.

"The more money you have to pay in assessments, the less is going to go back into the community," Zupancic said.

Meanwhile, he added, the Elks' parking lots are generally open for public use free of charge, because they "can't really charge for the use of their parking without losing their nonprofit status in certain respects." The organization can only charge for use of its parking lots a few days each year, and it does during events such as the Hood to Coast Relay.

"They get stuck between not being able to charge and having to pay maintenance fees," Zupancic said.

He said members were grateful the council considered the request for relief or some kind of reduction but the organization didn't have any expectations.

Council member Randy Frank said he doesn't mind offering some kind of relief or exemption for the Elks but

"it will just take time to sort through that."

The motion at last week's City Council meeting was to keep the Elks as part of the 2015-16 assessment. If the organization's lots were removed from consideration, it would require an approximately 2.7 percent rate increase per lot for other property owners, according to city staff.

In August, the council will have a workshop to discuss the assessment and look at what businesses and organizations are included and what they're charged. A few new businesses in the maintenance district, which was established in 1983 and hasn't changed since then, are not currently included in the assessment, Jordan said.

"I think it's a really good idea for us to look at the whole thing, not just the Elks," said Council member Tita Montero.

In other news:

- Mary Blake, a North Coast Food Web board member, asked the city to join in a private-public partnership to promote healthy food and local agriculture. Through the partnership, they could possibly host educational programs, support local nonprofits like the South Clatsop County Food Bank, expand community gardens and even build a community kitchen to create a broad-based food system. She suggested the possibility of using all or part of the city's farm, which is about 80 to 100 acres and located on Lewis and Clark Road. The partnership, Blake said, would fit into Way to Wellville, the five-year health challenge Clatsop County has started along with four other communities nationwide. They will seek county participation, including the use of available empty plots of land.

- The board announced two vacancies on the Seaside Tree Board and asked interested parties to apply.

Seaside moves closer to allowing medical marijuana dispensaries within UGB

City Council, Planning Commission discuss what to include in local ordinance

By Katherine Lacaze
Seaside Signal

The city of Seaside is moving ahead with its planning for where, how and when medical marijuana dispensaries will be able to operate within city limits and the Urban Growth Boundary.

The Seaside City Council and Seaside Planning Commission met Monday night for a joint work session on the topic.

The Planning Commission, which received public input at its March 3 meeting, is not recommending to add any zoning restrictions to those placed by the Oregon Health Authority's Medical Marijuana Dispensary Program,

which state a dispensary must be more than 1,000 feet from a school and from another dispensary. Seaside's Zoning Ordinance allows drug stores as a permissible use in a commercial zone, which is where dispensaries could be operated.

"We felt it would be unreasonably burdensome" to add more restrictions or regulations than those provided by the state, Planning Commission Chair Ray Romine said, adding they felt "no desire or great need for other restrictions."

The commission reached a consensus, he said, that, in all fairness, the city should treat dispensaries like

pharmacies in regards to zoning. Given the existing restrictions, there is only about four places a dispensary could operate.

Mayor Don Larson did not agree. He feels other restrictions should be considered.

"Otherwise I think this could get totally, totally out of line," he said. He suggested adding restrictions to a dispensary's distance from a park or daycare and its hours of operation.

City Manager Mark Winstanley said the city's parks are not in commercial zones or are next to schools. He cautioned that, if more restrictions are placed, they could work in reverse. Someone wanting to operate a daycare, for instance, could not do so within 800 or 900 feet of an existing dispensary, which

said she does not want the "federal law" restraint removed completely, in case it opens the door to other federally illegal business activity.

Winstanley suggested that medical marijuana dispensaries could be added as an exception, which would put the city in the most legally defensible position.

The business license ordinance was placed to monitor revenue, not to regulate. Winstanley said there would be some simplicity to crafting an entirely new ordinance dealing with medical marijuana dispensaries as opposed to changing the business license ordinance to something it was not intended for. The council and commission members agreed.

City staff will develop a draft ordinance and revision to the business license ordinance to bring before City Council at its April

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Ray Romine, planning commission chair

would limit the community's access to daycare.

To avoid potential legal situations, Winstanley said, it is being suggested that localities regulate the hours a dispensary cannot be open, rather than the hours it can be open, so it doesn't appear the city is allowing or supporting the businesses.

The City Council inevitably will have to change its business license ordinance, which states a business cannot "be unlawful, illegal or prohibited by the laws of the state or the United States." Marijuana, even for medical use, is outlawed federally. City Councilor Tita Montero

13 meeting. The traditional timeline, Winstanley said, would be for a first and second reading to occur at that meeting and then a third reading and adoption to occur at the second April meeting. In this case, however, it might take longer if the City Council members decide they want more restrictions and then select what those will be.

The city is not addressing recreational marijuana until the Oregon Liquor Control Commission, the state agency selected to implement the recreational marijuana law passed by voters in November, has announced its proposed restrictions and regulations.

Meals program keeps them going

Meals from Page 1A

On average, about 25 people dine in for lunch each day at the Seaside site. Meals also are delivered to about 20 people along a north route and south route, which together include the cities of Gearhart, Seaside and Cannon Beach and areas in between. The number of clients can vary by day, week or season. Some recipients are snowbirds who are in and out of the area, transfer to a hospital for a time, move to an assisted living facility or discontinue the service for other reasons.

The opportunity for normally home-bound individuals to dine at the community center has increased through a new transportation service being offered, courtesy of the Sunset Empire Park & Recreation District. As many as four people can receive transportation to the center for lunch, and the vehicle has room for two wheelchairs, as well. Pick up will be from 10 to 11:30 a.m.

"We hope to enable more home-bound, wheelchair-bound people to come visit," said Mike Hinton, who has served as the substitute meal site coordinator for about two years.

What's cooking

The meals vary each day, but include two options for an entree, such as Swedish meatballs, chicken and gravy, pork chops, baked fish and more; a starchy side like rice, potatoes, corn or bread; a side vegetable; and a dessert, such as fruit, cake, cookies, pudding or ice cream.

Hinton, who has an affinity for cooking and nu-

trition, said he wishes they were allowed to cook more, but the state regulates the meals to ensure nutritional value and food safety. Several of the dishes arrive from the provider, Bateman Senior Meals in Salem, pre-cooked or frozen. Hinton will warm up the food "and bring it back to life," while staying within the restrictions. Some of the fresh food is also delivered from a kitchen in Pacific City.

On their first visit, patrons are required to fill out a form to confirm they're disabled or older than 60 so the organization can have various dietary restrictions and preferences on file.

Making the program possible

The program's driving force is Hinton, the only paid staff member, and a squad of volunteers that Hinton hopes will grow to meet demand. Drivers are especially needed, but all volunteers are welcome, he said. People can volunteer as dining room servers, kitchen aides and entertainers, which could include dance teams, musical groups and guest speakers.

Most of the volunteers enjoy the work, such as Kive Dahlberg, a Seaside resident who was hard at work washing dishes, his signature chore, after a lunch last week; Jackie Bergeson, a retired woman who lives in Gearhart and used to help with a Meals on Wheels program in eastern Oregon; and Kelly Norton, an international flight attendant who volunteers whenever she's home.

Their purpose in volunteering is to give back to the community and serve oth-



KATHERINE LACAZE PHOTO
Volunteer Kive Dahlberg washes dishes after a senior lunch at the Bob Chisholm Community Center.

ers, Bergeson and Norton said. And there's no slacking involved just because the work doesn't result in a paycheck.

"I just believe we have a social responsibility to take care of people, however we can," said Norton, who's been volunteering since December. "I treat them the same way I would a first-class passenger on a trip to Sydney."

She believes veterans and elders are two groups of people that often need help and deserve respect. Taking care of them, and others in need, helps "increase your happiness quota," Norton said.

The volunteers see how the patrons benefit from the socialization provided by dining in. For many of the clients, that's the most prominent aspect of the experience, as well.

"(The patrons) don't come here for the meal, they come here for the companionship. The meal is a bonus," said Claudia Stanton, one of the regulars.

Renee Armstrong, a retired veteran who attends the lunch several times per week with his service dog, Red, agreed.

"This is one of the most important things seniors can get," he said, referring to a meal they don't have to cook and a chance to socialize with others.

As for the Meals on Wheels recipients, a lot of them "aren't on the radar in the community," Hinton said. The volunteer drivers absorb a secondary responsibility of being a point of contact for the clients. They are attentive to precarious situations, which means they sometimes call in help if a senior needs medical attention; report signs of potential abuse or other health and safety issues; alert case workers if there's any change of status; and give referrals to other social services or resources. They provide a crucial support system, Hinton said, adding, "There is a remarkable amount of need in this county."

The need is not always obvious, Sage said, and sometimes people don't know it exists around the area. "We are around here, though," he said.

For Carol Cutler, a client in Cannon Beach who is "pretty much home-bound," the Meals on Wheels service is "the difference between eating or not eating, basically," she said. Often the donated meals are the only thing she'll eat in a given day. Between Meals on Wheels and the Cannon Beach Food Pantry, "they keep me going," she said.

To volunteer or learn more about the program, call Hinton at 503-738-9323.



JAMES OLSON PHOTO
The 2015 Lady Liberty Award winners, from left, Judith Maddox Bigby and Jeanne Maddox Peterson.

Inspirational sisters to be honored at luncheon

Lady Liberty tickets on sale now

The Liberty Theater has announced that its annual Lady Liberty Awards Luncheon, A Salute to People of Distinction, is being held from noon to 1:30 p.m. April 9. The award recognizes and honors people of achievement who live or work in the Columbia Pacific Region. This year's honorees are sisters, Jeanne Maddox Peterson and Judith Maddox Bigby, who will be celebrated as inspirations and dedicated community volunteers.

Honorees are selected on the basis of exemplary volunteerism, professional excellence and contributions to the community as a whole. Each is individually diverse in their accomplishments and represents a wide range of interests and fields of endeavor.

Peterson's contributions include an exceptionally high quality of dance and choreography classes, and her graceful way of mentoring to generations of local students. She is being honored as an inspiration and an example of professional excellence.

Bigby's contributions include service on the Oregon Community Foundation Leadership Council, serving as principal of Astor Elementary School, her oversight of Cinderella's Closet with the Assistance League and service on the Liberty Board, to name but a few. She is being honored for her contributions to the community as a whole.

Tickets for the luncheon cost \$50 each and are available at the Liberty Theater box office, which is open from 2 to 5:30 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday.

For information, call the theater at 503-325-5922.