

‘Paddle Out’ celebrates life of longtime Cannon Beach resident

A Paddle Out and Life Celebration for Cannon Beach 50-year resident Jack Brown was held on Sunday, Feb. 22, in the Seaside Cove at the bottom of Tillamook Head. About 200 of Jack’s community including his family, friends and surfers gathered to celebrate his life. Generations of surfers and residents of the North Coast gathered to feel the connection Jack always brought to his community; one of inclusiveness and love. It began with a service on the beach with nearly 100 surfers in wetsuits and their boards on the rocks, along with another hundred of Jack’s community who weren’t doing the “paddle out.” Longtime Seaside resident and director of NW Women’s Surf Camps Lexie Hallahan presided.

“Sometimes in our lives we’re given a gem of opportunity to meet and know an extraordinary person, one who changes our lives. Jack Brown was that gem,” said Hallahan. “A great surfing buddy to us all, his nearly fifty years of surfing along the Oregon Coast, crossed between generations of us surfers. A mentor, who shared

with us life’s lasting lessons, not only in his words and wonderful humor, but in how he lived his life; simply, fully, with love and great generosity. Jack was our hero, a man we all respected, loved and adored. Our world, both in and out of the water, was made more brilliant because of Jack Brown. It’s our turn now, as his surfing community and friends to carry Jack’s great spirit of intention forward.”

Local Seaside resident and surfer Joyce Hunt read a quote attributed to John F. Kennedy, spoken by the late president at the Australian Ambassador’s Dinner for the American’s Cup Crews on September 14, 1962, in Newport, Rhode Island.

“I really don’t know why it is that all of us are so committed to the sea, except I think it’s because in addition to the fact that the sea changes, and ships change, it’s because we all came from the sea. And it is an interesting biological fact that all of us have in our veins the exact same percentage of salt in our blood that exists in the ocean, and therefore, we have salt in our blood, our



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Jack Brown, avid surfer and longtime Cannon Beach resident.

sweat and our tears. We are tied to the ocean. And when we go back to the sea, whether it is to surf (sail) or to watch it, we are going back from whence we came,” said Kennedy in capturing the spirit of what humans share with the ocean.

Bunches of flowers were passed around the community on the beach to throw into the shore break and into the center of the “paddle out circle” once surfers made it out to the outer cove. Then the nearly 100 surfers all migrated to the cove riptide to paddle outside together. The day had been blessed with warm east winds, sunshine and a long period four foot ground swells, perfect for the paddle out service. In the surfer’s parking lot on the west side of the Lanai Motel, while surfers were paddling out, Hawaiian music was played by local surfer and Hawaiian Hank Snell, which carried out over the waves to be heard both by them and the people on the rocky beach.

Once to the outer cove, the surfers formed a large circle, holding each other’s hands in solidarity and community for their friend, Jack Brown. Local surfer Jon Leiter gave the final life toast in the center of the circle recognizing the great person Jack was for how he was so inclusive in the community and encouraged all of the surfers there to take with them and share that piece of Jack. Flowers were thrown into the middle of the circle followed by lots of cheering and splashing of the ocean, representative of energy being lifted from the ocean (water) to the air and spirit (ether).

After the circle ceremony, surfers paddled back into the waves for hours of party waves, followed by a large bonfire with smoked salmon provided by the Tillamook Head Kopra brothers, David and John. That night, the moon’s shape was a perfect smile with the planet Venus, planet of Love, hanging right below the moon in the sky.

Hyak project faces hurdle

Hyak from Page 8A

At that time, the building was going to be renovated with a \$500,000 grant that Oregon Housing and Community Services awarded to the county authority. But the deal between Helping Hands and the county authority was thrown into limbo in December 2012 when the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners took over the county authority and dismissed the agency’s board, executive director and operations manager.

The grant was put on hold, along with a loan to complete the purchase of the building. When Helping Hands Executive Director Alan Evans found out the monthly payment to lease the building would be \$3,500 instead of \$1,000, as he originally believed, he backed off the deal completely.

NOHA now administers the county authority, although the county commissioners continue to serve as the county housing authority’s board. NOHA applied with Oregon Housing and Community Services to sponsor the Hyak Building project, and the state agreed to that proposal and will grant the \$500,000 in general housing account funds when the property is owned by NOHA. The agency then will use the money to renovate the building.

The agenda for Thursday’s meeting of the NOHA board of directors included the signing of a draft

agreement with the county authority to take over the Hyak property. Public comments were also taken at that meeting.

Last week, Johnston said they’ve finished a capital needs assessment and environmental report and were ready to get contractors to do the construction. He doesn’t foresee the project being stopped or moved, even in light of the complaints.

“If the zoning has to be changed, or if the non-compliant use cannot continue, which we do plan to dispute or look into further, if that can’t be resolved, then we feel confident we can still move the project forward using the current zoning regulations,” Johnston told the county authority board. “We still feel like it’s an important project for the community, for that population and for the county.”

Evans agreed the organization would be willing to alter its plans to conform, if that is what the city of Seaside decides or if an appeal fails.

“It’s still a workable project for Helping Hands and I believe that we can move forward with it,” he said. “We’re going to make this obstacle into an opportunity.”

The county housing authority will have to pay attorney fees for a preliminary investigation to review the zoning regulation concerns and form a response. County Commissioner Lianne Thompson asked for an estimation of the cost before moving forward.

Critics in a huff over timber harvest inside growth boundary

Project approved by Dept. of Forestry but did not have permits from city

By Katherine Lacaze
Seaside Signal

A commercial timber harvesting project on private property in Seaside’s Urban Growth Boundary has caused a stir among private citizens and the Oregon Coast Alliance.

A couple weeks ago, Wanda McGrath thinned about half of a small one-acre forest on her property on North Wahanna Road. The property, which sits along the Neawanna Creek, is outside city limits but inside the Urban Growth Boundary. It is partially zoned suburban residential, and the section abutting the creek is zoned conservation aquatic.

The operator who was hired to do the cutting, Dennis Larson of Astoria-based Dennis Larson Excavating, submitted a notification of operation for the project to the Oregon Department of Forestry in January, which was more than 15 days in advance, as required by the state to allow time for cooperative discussions before activities begin.

Neal Bond, a protection unit forester with the Oregon Department of Forestry, said the agency did a pre-inspection to make sure the activity complied with the Forest Practices Act rules.

Neawanna Creek, which is a large fish stream, is in close proximity to the area. When Ashley Lertora, a stewardship forester with the department,

and a wildlife biologist met on-site, they checked for any protected resources and endangered species, but found none, nor anything of concern to prevent the project, Bond said.

The only reason McGrath wanted to harvest trees, she said, was because there were some she felt could potentially cause damage. The property contains three houses and if one of the several 90-foot trees had fallen down, it could have endangered the buildings and people’s lives, she said.

Some people have argued the city should have intervened on the project. The city has jurisdiction over areas within the Urban Growth Boundary, according to a joint management agreement adopted in 1995 and amended in 1996.

The city did not know about the project until it was too late, Seaside Planning Director Kevin Cupples said. Usually the city is notified by the Department of Forestry before a project like this occurs, he said, as it would have required erosion control and land clearing permits, neither of which were obtained for this project. The department did not notify the city, which was an oversight, Bond said.

Cupples said it didn’t matter, as they would have deferred to the Department of Forestry anyway.

“It’s not as if it was something that would have been denied,” he said.

The harvest process

The Department of Forestry restricts how timber

harvesting is done within 200 feet from the edge of wetlands, as per the Forest Practices Act. Half the trees by species, as well as diameter class, must remain, along with the first row of trees along the waterway. The project must also follow rules designed for large fish streams and estuaries. There are no regulations past 200 feet.

The department didn’t require replanting trees or any sort of growth since it was just a thinning, not a clear cut, and it “doesn’t make much sense to remove trees that could hit a structure and then replant,” Bond said.

Lertora has conducted a post-harvest inspection and the project was found to be in compliance with the Forest Practices Act.

Project concerns expressed

At the March 9 City Council meeting, Daniel O’Neil, who lives by McGrath’s property on North Wahanna Road, said timber harvesting in a residential area along a sensitive creek makes no sense. In addition, he was never informed about the harvest, and there was no time to have his property line surveyed. O’Neil claimed he could have owned some of the trees. McGrath disagreed, saying the land was surveyed when they first bought the property.

She did not notify the neighbors of the project, she said. “I didn’t think it was any of their business because it didn’t interfere with them.”

On March 19, the Oregon Coast Alliance, a nonprofit whose mission is to protect and restore coastal natural resources, wrote a letter to Mayor Don Larson and City Council members expressing the alliance’s “concern for recent actions taken by the city of Seaside which are directly prohibited by Seaside ordinances and other actions, which raise questions about the city’s watershed management policies.” The letter referenced McGrath’s commercial timber harvesting project, as well as the city’s recent commercial timber harvest in the South Fork Necanicum Watershed.

The letter stated that, according to Seaside’s Zoning Ordinance, since timber harvesting is not listed as a permissible use in a suburban residential zone, it falls under prohibited uses by default. Prohibited uses are all those not permitted outright or as conditional uses under the zoning section. Commercial timber harvesting also is not listed as a use or activity permitted with review nor a conditional use or activity in aquatic conservation zones.

“Since timber harvesting is prohibited in the zones which apply to this property, Seaside illegally permitted it,” the letter from the alliance claims. “An illegal approval such as this one makes the city vulnerable to legal challenge. In the future, the city must not allow timber harvests on any property in the city’s jurisdiction when the zoning code prohibits such use.”

The fact that the city’s Timber Management Plan has not been updated since 1983, combined with the city’s recent timber harvest on its Necanicum Watershed property and the city allowing McGrath’s commercial project, “shows a lack of understanding by the city of modern watershed and ecosystem-based management principles – especially important in a watershed that is the residents’ drinking water source,” the letter states. In the future, the alliance would like to collaborate with the city to protect its wetlands, forests and watershed.

The alliance also recommended the city work with the Necanicum Watershed Council, the North Coast Land Conservancy and other interest groups to update the forest management plan, develop a watershed management plan and create alternative funding methods for future watershed purchases.

City’s response

Cupples disagreed with the alliance’s interpretation of the Zoning Ordinance, saying it does not “prohibit” timber harvesting, which is an activity not a use. Timber harvesting is only regulated under the coastal lake and

freshwater wetlands, or A-3, zone, he said.

The A-3 section of the Zoning Ordinance states: “Within the Urban Growth Boundary, occasional selective harvesting of timber is not considered to be a primary use and the use will be subjected to rigorous requirements should a permit be applied for and granted.” The harvesting can only take place, the ordinance continues, with a conditional-use permit from the city.

The Comprehensive Plan does not address timber harvesting except to say “there are no commercial forest lands in the Seaside Urban Growth Boundary.” The phrase, Cupples said, was “simply pointing out the lands owned by commercial timber companies were located outside” the Urban Growth Boundary.

“No timber company would argue that Mrs. McGrath is a commercial timber grower,” he said. “She had some clearing done on the property. And the fact that she disposed of the trees by selling them, that’s not a violation of our ordinance.”

Since some trees in the riparian area were cut down, the city will require McGrath to put in some vegetation or growth, Cupples said.

Recreation district board votes to ask former general manager to step in as interim director

By Katherine Lacaze
Seaside Signal

The Sunset Empire Park & Recreation District Board is hoping to find an interim director for the district as it continues its search for a new permanent executive director.

At a special meeting Tuesday, the board voted unanimously to have the Special Districts Association of Oregon, the agency assisting in the executive director search on a contract, to ask Mary Blake, the district’s former general manager, to serve as in-

terim executive director. It was unknown by press time if she accepted the offer. If she accepts, she likely would serve until a permanent replacement is found.

If she were to turn it down, the board will schedule another meeting to choose a different option. The decision came after Bill Anderson, the SDAO representative working with the recreation district, looked for alternatives within the community but could not find an appropriate person who was available.

Since former General

Manager Justin Cutler resigned in March, the department managers have absorbed various duties and responsibilities. While the board is grateful for staff being willing to step up, Board Chair Mike Hinton said, the board believes it’s important to find an interim director to oversee and provide continuity of the various departments.

About 40 people responded to advertisements for the executive director position. The board narrowed the pool down to six primary candidates and three alternates. A committee of

Anderson and two board members was scheduled to conduct phone interviews with the candidates this week and Monday before inviting a number of the candidates for in-person interviews.

The board has asked Jan Barber and Diane Somers, of the Sunset Park & Recreation Foundation, to be contact people for the Special Districts Association of Oregon to help facilitate the interview process and find members for a community panel and a technical panel, both of which will interview the candidates.

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