

Finding the right 'fit' for a new rec director

On community hiring panel, we looked for passion, concern, eagerness

When Mary Blake, interim executive director of the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District, asked me to be on the community panel that would interview candidates for the permanent director, I eagerly agreed.

As a reporter, I have covered the hiring of many top executives in myriad companies and organizations. But, as someone who's more curious about what goes on behind the curtain than onstage, I've always been interested in how and why the hires were made.

I wouldn't imagine it was difficult to attract the 40-plus applicants for the recreation district director's job. Who wouldn't want to live on the North Coast, near the ocean, mountains and forests and be challenged every day to provide recreation opportunities for South County residents?

I've done my own share of hiring for newspapers, talking to eager applicants, reading between the lines on resumes, asking probing questions, trying to find the right "fit" for both the applicant and the job.

But this was the first time I had been asked to participate in hiring

for a public agency. As a holder of a year-round pass and a fairly frequent user of the district's facilities, and as a former editor and reporter who regularly attended district board meetings, I was probably as qualified as anyone to be on the community panel.

And so were the other four panel members, who regularly used the district pool or participated in the district's foundation. We were eager to meet the three finalists.

As expected, each had their own strengths. Darren Gooch, the district's information technology and marketing manager who has worked in a variety of district positions, is as familiar with district operations as anyone could be. He's also active and well-liked in the community. Another applicant had many years' experience running recreation districts elsewhere. The third applicant, Skyler Archibald, had both the experience of running a university recreation center and growing up in Seaside.

On interview day, the applicants toured the facility on Broadway. Then, they spent time answering questions posed by the technical committee, composed

IMPRESSIONS

By
NANCY MCCARTHY



We take our health seriously here on the North Coast.

of folks who know something about how a pool, gym and community center are supposed to run. Eventually, each applicant made his way to our panel.

We had a list of seven questions, all written out for us. We asked about the applicant's background, the district's role in helping the underserved in the community, what it should take to maintain a good staff and keep the district's \$2.5 million budget on an even keel.

We listened closely to their answers, but we looked more at what was behind those answers. Because, since Feb. 14, 1969, when voters first approved the district, it has been close to their hearts, and not just because Election Day happened to be Valentine's Day.

In the limited time we had and within the interview boundaries imposed on us, we attempted to discover the true applicant. We searched for his passion to help residents lead a healthy lifestyle; his concern for those who cannot afford to pay for a meal or a daily swim, let alone a yearly pass; his eagerness to become involved in the community for the community's sake and not just because it will further the recreation district's mission.

In both Archibald and Gooch we found those qualities.

The technical and community panels forwarded their names to the district board, and by the board's 3-2 decision, it is obvious that the board members had a tough choice.

Archibald will be the district's next executive director, and he will be a fine leader, with all the qualities necessary to lead the

district into the future and a compassion for the community that compelled him to offer his family the experiences he enjoyed while growing up here.

But the board's decision put the district's patrons in the best possible position.

With Archibald coming on board and Gooch already there, as well as other trained staff members, the district's leadership is in good shape.

Now, it's up to the community to work with the district to fulfill the promise that was made by those voters 38 years ago. We take our health seriously here on the North Coast, and what better way to offer the possibility of healthier lives for all than through an existing facility that provides a variety of opportunities to be active? Let the district's leaders know how you would like them to reach out to the community.

Then, let's all go out and play!

Nancy McCarthy retired recently as editor of the Seaside Signal and Cannon Beach Gazette and as the South County reporter for The Daily Astorian. She is enjoying retirement and lives in Cannon Beach.

Letters to the Editor

Expansion should consider tsunami risk

To the Editor:

I believe it is important to expand the economic stability that wintertime use of the Seaside Civic and Convention Center has brought to Seaside. The center's management has determined that this can be done by redesigning the existing building and expanding its facilities to serve larger conventions. It would appear from newspaper reports that many consider financing this project impossible.

Bringing more residents into the Seaside tsunami inundation zone is simply not responsible. Bringing more tourists and visitors into this zone is a problem, but one that can be easily mitigated if the City of Seaside would develop suitable planning. Regardless of convention center expansion, the city should be working

with its elected state legislators and state emergency preparedness agencies to provide a tsunami shelter in the downtown area of Seaside. The federal government (FEMA) has already designed shelters that are tsunami safe because they are elevated by reinforced parking structures.

Phase 1 of any downtown expansion must be the construction of this type of structure over the Edgewood right-of-way. Local match funding of approximately \$750,000 a year can come from savings by contracting out Seaside's policing needs to the Clatsop County Sheriff's department. Communities throughout Oregon are executing these types of contracts and are experiencing not only savings but also better protection as well as getting the support of all of those who are in law enforcement.

Phase 2 should be the revision and expansion of the convention center. Requirements for expansion should be

much smaller because, with proper design, the evacuation facilities could be used as additional convention space. Financing for this smaller project can be achieved by raising the bed tax to 9.9 percent.

John Dunzer
Seaside

Dog owners: Please clean up after your pet!

To the Editor:

I am a resident of Seaside and am a proud dog owner. Since the weather is getting warmer, more dog owners out walking their dogs, which is awesome. But come on people, the city provides doggie poop bags all along the prom and in its parks, can you please use them! I use them if I am out of mine or out of the plastic grocery bags that work just as nicely. Oh, and just because you happen

to use the "poop bags" does not mean you can leave it on the sidewalk either. They also have garbage cans all along there as well as in the parks.

On a daily basis I see people letting their dogs do their business in others' yards, but turn away like they can't see them doing it, then walk away leaving the "gift" behind in the person's yard. Seriously? I went out to walk my dog this morning, and when I got home, someone had let their dog use my yard and didn't clean it up! Not only is this disrespectful, but as a dog owner who keeps up to date on my dogs health, I don't know if your dog is. Please do not expose my dog.

I am pretty sure if someone let their dog use your yard, and did not clean it up you would be unhappy, why be that person? Please just be respectful to others and our city, keep it cleaned up for all us.

Tammy Wayne
Seaside

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