

Transportation district seeks to increase presence

SETD from Page 1A

looking for easier transitions and connections between the Cannon Beach bus and the Highway 101 bus, which currently connect behind the Seaside Cinema on 12th Avenue. Something on the highway might provide better access, he said.

Having that presence would be good for South County, Hazen said. "It would be good for the district, because we want to be relevant throughout the whole county," he said.

Seaside is the source of many visitors each year. Its location on U.S. Highway 101 also makes it susceptible to congestion, a source of frustration for those who live and work in the city. Public transportation can help mitigate congestion and increase accessibility for Seaside riders, Hazen said.

"We can be part of that solution," he said. "If some of those people weren't driving those cars and were riding the bus, that's less vehicles on the highway."

A Seaside transit facility also would fit well into the Northwest Oregon's regional transit system, North by Northwest CONNECTOR. The alliance consists of Sunset Empire Transportation District, the Columbia County Rider, the Tillamook County Transportation District, Lincoln County Transit and Benton County Rural Transit.

"We're all in this together," Hazen said. "We're not competing against each other. We're all providing a service in rural America. The more we can connect, the better off we're all going to be."

Elsewhere throughout the district, the agency is moving forward with some changes. For instance, the district is considering the addition of a new service to get riders to Portland. The district's bus currently connects with

the Columbia County Rider either in Westport or Clatskanie, and riders can continue on to Portland with bus changes along the way.

Sunset Empire Transportation District and the Columbia County Rider are working toward a new intercity route that would connect in Rainier, where riders could choose between going to Portland or Longview, Wash. The route would run twice per day, seven days per week.

"We felt it would be a lot less confusing," Hazen said.

The agencies are hoping to start that service by Aug. 1. At its July 23 meeting, the district's Board of Commissioners will hold a public hearing on the matter.

"It's really important we engage the public in those decisions," Hazen said.

The district also plans to add more frequent rides between Astoria and Seaside on Highway 101 starting in August. There used to be hourly service, but when the district faced financial difficulties that changed, Hazen said. The goal is to bring back hourly service during peak times, such as morning and late afternoon.

Another priority for the district this year is increasing transportation for veterans.

"There are a lot of gaps there," Hazen said.

The Veterans Administration runs a bus from Astoria to the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Portland. The problem is many local veterans don't have a way to get to that van, Hazen said.

The district and other partners are considering solutions, including a volunteer group that could provide a sort of dial-a-ride service for veterans. Since the district doesn't have "an endless supply of money," volunteers and other partners are important to help the agency overcome challenges and provide better service, Hazen said.

Fantasy series draws its inspiration from the coast

Award-winning Oregon coast author Melissa Eskue Ousley will launch the final book in her young adult series, "The Solas Beir Trilogy," this July, kicking off a regional book tour. She will be reading from "The Sower Comes" Saturday, July 11, at 1 p.m., at a book launch party at Beach Books, 616 Broadway, in Seaside. For every book sold during the first week of its release, July 11-18, the author will donate \$1 to Clatsop Community College for student scholarships up to \$500 to assist students with financial need.

The fantasy adventure began with "Sign of the Throne," released in 2013. Haunted by dreams that come true, Abby's world was turned upside-down when she met David, the doppelgänger of the mysterious young man in her dreams. After discovering that he was the lost heir to the throne of Cai Terenmare, Abby and David battled

blood-thirsty monsters in a race to claim his birthright. The story concludes in "The Sower Comes" as the new king realizes how heavy a crown can be. David had no clue about the sacrifices he would be forced to make. Now, battling a tyrant intent on stealing his throne, and facing a new evil threatening to rip the realm apart, saving his world may cost David everything.

The ancient forests and rocky coasts of Cai Terenmare were inspired by the Oregon coast, a tribute to Eskue Ousley's beloved Oregon. Eskue Ousley's debut novel, "Sign of the Throne," was an Amazon Best Seller and won a 2014 Eric Hoffer Book Award and a 2014 Readers' Favorite International Book Award. Her second book in the series, "The Rabbit and the Raven," released in 2014, received strong praise from reviewers and has also been nominated for several awards.

City revisits itinerant merchant regs

Proposed amendment would expand definition to apply to panhandlers, street performers

By Katherine Lacaze
Seaside Signal

The city of Seaside is exploring a new method for making Seaside less appealing to panhandlers: requiring them to apply for a \$50 per day itinerant merchant permit in order to solicit in public.

More than 30 years since the adoption of an ordinance regarding itinerant merchants, the city is en route to updating the ordinance to make it more "permissive," which means the city would allow certain activities as long they conform to regulations, City Manager Mark Winstanley said.

At its meeting June 22, Seaside City Council discussed an ordinance amending Chapter 114 of the Code of Seaside that regulates the buying and selling of merchandise "by individuals that do not have a fixed location," Winstanley said. The ordinance went into effect in 1984 and has not undergone significant changes since then, so the city believes it should be updated.

In 1984, Winstanley said, "We could say, 'no, you don't get to do certain activities,'" but today, it is more difficult for municipalities to ban people from doing things that are not illegal or unconstitutional. The itinerant merchants license ordinance "was a concern for us, because it was a restrictive ordinance, so we

rewrote it to be permissive," Winstanley said.

The definition of an itinerant merchant in the code currently applies to "a person occupying a temporary fixed location, who promotes, solicits or sells from stock or inventory on hand or displays samples and solicits orders for merchandise in stock." The amendment seeks to expand the definition to include any person or persons who provide "a service (entertainment, etc.) or solicits for any form of compensation or remuneration." This addition would encompass any person offering a service, entertainment or nothing in return for compensation.

As opposed to how panhandling is addressed in the city's general offenses ordinance, which is restrictive in that it entirely bans begging or soliciting on the streets or in any public place, the amendment to the itinerant merchant regulation would allow that activity — as long as the individual has obtained a permit. The fees remain unchanged: \$50 per day or a maximum of \$1,000 in a calendar year.

Many municipalities' laws restricting or disallowing panhandling or begging have come under scrutiny as being unconstitutional in the past few years.

"It's one of the things that has changed," Winstanley said, adding it has put police officers in a difficult position when it comes to enforcement. With the amendment, he said, "We're telling them that that would be okay, but you just have to follow the rules."

Police officers only will have to make sure panhandlers or other itinerant merchants have a permit, and if they don't, advise them it is a requirement by law.

The amendment also would change the definition of temporary fixed location from "any business location or private property" that is not enclosed within the confines of or used as accessory to a permanent commercial structure to "any business location, public or private."

The amendment also states "all services must be discontinued during these hours," referring to from 10 p.m. to 8 a.m., when all merchandise and ancillary equipment must be enclosed within a permanent commercial structure or removed from the temporary fixed location.

"We also wanted to make sure there was an understanding that itinerant merchants could only work during what's basically the daytime hours," Winstanley said.

Councilor Tita Montero said she liked the change be-

causes sometimes entertainment can cause a disturbance between nighttime hours.

The penalty for violating the ordinance is \$500, but the amendment seeks to increase the penalty to \$700.

Finally, the amendment adds a new exception: "The city reserves the right to limit licensing in heavily congested areas during periods of extreme crowding to protect the safety and security of both merchants and customers."

There are certain times during the year — such as Fourth of July or during the Hood 2 Coast Relays — that are not appropriate for people to be selling or soliciting as itinerant merchants because of congestion and other safety concerns, Winstanley said.

"There's just too much activity in the downtown core area, which is where we see the majority of itinerant merchants," he added.

The ordinance does not apply to garage sales or farmers markets, which are licensed under a different ordinance.

After a public comment section, during which no one spoke, the council approved motions for a first reading and second reading of the ordinance by title only. The ordinance is slated for a third reading and possible adoption at the council's July 13 meeting.



The ordinance 'was a concern for us, because it was a restrictive ordinance, so we rewrote it to be permissive.'

City Manager Mark Winstanley

Sunset recreation district approves \$2.68M budget for upcoming year

Broadway Field continues to put stress on district finances

By Katherine Lacaze
Seaside Signal

The Sunset Empire Park & Recreation District board of directors approved a budget of \$2,684,236 for fiscal year 2015-16.

At its meeting June 17, the board made a few last minute changes amounting to \$60,000 before unanimously approving the budget, which was previously approved by the district's Budget Committee in May.

The budget encapsulates the General Fund and three special revenue funds, including the Park Fund, Building Replacement Fund and Broadway Field Fund. The General Fund is the largest of the four and covers six departments — administration, aquatics, the Bob Chisholm Community Center, recreation, special events and the Youth Center.

As of the June 17 meeting, the district is projecting \$2,317,483 in expenditures for fiscal year 2015-16, which would leave an estimated \$366,753 in unappropriated funds, since the expected

revenue total is \$2,684,236. Expenditures are budgeted to increase about 3 percent in 2015-16 over last year's expenditures, but revenue also is expected to increase.

More than half the district's revenue comes from property taxes. The district has a total assessed value of more than \$1.5 billion for fiscal year 2015-16, and the permanent tax rate is nearly \$0.93 per \$1,000 of assessed value. About \$1,435,287 in taxes should be generated, but since some taxes go uncollected in a given year, the district budgets a collection rate of 93 percent, or \$1,334,816.

In addition to property taxes, the district is expecting approximately \$1,349,420 in timber taxes, donations, carry-over from 2014-15 and other miscellaneous sources, such as service and rental fees.

The amendments the board made to what was approved by the budget committee and advertised ahead of the June 17 meeting were to allot \$50,000 rather than \$30,000 for contract services in the administration department; allot \$64,310 rather than \$44,310 in capital outlay for the aquatics apartment; and allot \$119,210 rather than \$99,210 for Youth Center leaders. The changes, proposed by interim Executive

Director Mary Blake, will go toward covering contracting services, renovation to the women's locker rooms at the pool and changing the pay range for the Youth Center's recreational leaders from \$9.25 to \$11 or \$10 to \$14. The board supported the changes.

The board also scheduled a special board meeting for June 24 with the intention of re-adopting the resolution with an amendment that would increase expenditures in the Community Center department, under personnel services, by about \$35,000, according to Finance Director Jennifer Stephens. The amendment also would decrease the district's unappropriated funds, but the overall budget amount for 2015-16 would remain the same if the new resolution was adopted.

The district is currently in a financially stable position, Blake said.

"This is going to be a real fun time of bringing people on and getting them excited about the district and the programming," she added.

One of the few bleak spots is Broadway Field, which the Sunset Empire Park & Recreation District maintains as part of an intergovernmental agreement with the city of Seaside and Seaside School


District 10. With more than 90 percent of fiscal year 2014-15 accounted for as of May 31, the district had spent about 93.6 percent of funds budgeted for the field, or about \$65,000, but had only brought in 52.3 percent of projected revenue, or nearly \$36,400. Additionally, the 2015-16 budget includes another transfer from the General Fund to offset the projected operational deficit next year.

"This is a result of several factors, including lack of rentals, and under-performing concessions, as a result of the open nature of the park," Blake wrote in her budget message.

Now that the district has completed two full seasons, staff is working with the city and school district to review and possibly update the IGA or create a new one. As the agreement stands, it is not sustainable for the district, Blake said, and "everyone is on the alert that it's not sustainable. It is urgent to have a deep discussion on what's happening."

Already this year the district has seen increased financial participation from its partners, as the city purchased rubber for the field and the school district purchased gravel to stabilize the bleachers for baseball, Blake wrote.

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