

# Widdop won't run for mayor again

**Gearhart leader says she has 'no intention of running for office again'**

By R.J. Marx  
Seaside Signal

Gearhart's Mayor Dianne Widdop, who survived a divisive recall election last year, will not run for re-election in November.

Widdop, who joined the City Council more than two decades ago, was elected mayor in 2012.

"Absolutely and positively, I have no intention of running for office again," she said. "Between the Budget Committee and the City Council, I've been involved with the city since 1993. This is 23 years of volunteering for everything."

As mayor, Widdop's policy initiatives have included new rules on short-term rentals, the improvement of the Ridge Path, regulation of Nea-

coxie Barn and guidelines for recreational vehicles. She presided over the opening of the city's first water treatment plant.

Widdop also serves on the Seaside Municipal Airport Advisory Committee, a role she will retain.

In 1994, Widdop's first bid for City Council ended in a tie. After a second election in 1995, she won by a substantial margin.

Widdop served on the council for 16 years before running for mayor in 2012 after the retirement of Kent Smith, who had served in that role for 20 years.

"Kent Smith is a good friend of



Dianne Widdop

**'I'm going to be able to enjoy life, be off the hot seat, go to a City Council meeting, sit in the back and voice my opinion.'**

Gearhart Mayor Dianne Widdop

mine, so I always knew that while he was running, I wouldn't run against him," Widdop said at the time.

In that election, Widdop narrowly defeated opponent Bob Shortman. After a recount, only five votes separated the candidates.

In 2014, Widdop faced a recall challenge after Gearhart resident Harold Gable claimed "abuse of leadership, lack of transparency and strong personal bias."

Voters supported Widdop in the March 2015 special election, with 64 percent of voters opposing the mayor's recall.

After the vote, Widdop said she was glad there was a large margin. "There is no question as to how people have felt about this," she said at the time.

This week, Widdop said she did not know who would follow her as mayor, "but there is someone we've been talking to."

Councilors Sue Lorain, who took Widdop's position on the council in 2012, and Dan Jesse, who ran and won in 2012, are also up for re-election in Gearhart.

Candidates have until mid-August to file for the November mayoral election.

As for Widdop, her post-mayoral plans are uncertain. "I'm going to be able to enjoy life, be off the hot seat, go to a City Council meeting, sit in the back and voice my opinion," she said.

## Widdop Timeline

**1994:** Widdop's first bid for City Council ended in a tie.

**1995:** After a second election, she won by a substantial margin.

**1996-2012:** Widdop served on the council for 16 years before running for mayor. In that election, Widdop narrowly defeated opponent Bob Shortman by five votes.

**2014:** Widdop faced a recall challenge after Gearhart resident Harold Gable claimed "abuse of leadership, lack of transparency and strong personal bias."

**2015:** Widdop won the March 2015 special election, with 64 percent of voters opposing the mayor's recall.

# Neacoxie Barn remains shuttered

**Barn's commercial future in hands of county court**

By R.J. Marx  
Seaside Signal

County Circuit Court Judge Cindee Matyas extended a stipulated injunction at the Gearhart barn used for parties and special events. The extension will keep the Pacific Way property off limits for commercial use until owner Shannon Smith provides the city of Gearhart with plans to obtain a valid certificate of occupancy.

And with a new attorney, Smith hopes to reconcile with the city.

Smith, the owner of Neacoxie Barn, a former livery stable turned into a party space, is

now represented by Dean Alterman of Folawn, Alterman & Richardson of Portland.

"She and I had a very productive meeting with the city two weeks ago," Alterman said Tuesday. "We are looking forward to working with the city to get the situation squared away."

The injunction's March 1 extension follows a long and tangled legal path.

Smith repeatedly challenged the city's demand for a conditional use permit and rented out the barn for weddings, family reunions and other special events. Without toilets, sanitary facilities and safety measures, the city cited the barn for a string of building and zoning violations.

Along with local zone and municipal code actions, Gearhart officials filed a motion

in Clatsop County Circuit Court to close the barn from commercial use until health and safety violations were addressed and a certificate of occupancy delivered.

An additional \$5,000 administrative penalty is pending, the ninth state building code violation delivered by the city to the barn for holding events without an occupancy permit, Gearhart's City Administrator Chad Sweet said.

A hearing on that matter is scheduled in Gearhart City Hall in late April, Sweet said.

The stipulated agreement between the city and Smith was delivered New Year's Eve.

The March 1 extension gives Smith two more months to satisfy city requirements, Sweet said. Any commercial event at the barn would face a

full injunction through the Circuit Court.

Alterman said Smith next steps will "probably include" submitting building plans and filing for permits to bring the event space up to code.

"More than that I can't tell you because I don't know myself," Alterman said. "It's the sort of thing where the building and the zoning code are not quite in sync. They weren't designed to work with unusual and unique properties such as this one."

Alterman said he is "assuming" Smith will observe the terms of the stipulated injunction prior to its expiration May 1.

"There are a number of different ways we might find agreement with the city," Alterman said. "We're just not sure which ones they are yet."

# Residents fight Gearhart brew pub plans

**Appeal filed challenging market transition**

By R.J. Marx  
Seaside Signal

What is the need for a new brew pub and deli in Gearhart?

Not much, say five residents seeking a review of a Gearhart Planning Commission decision to grant a conditional use permit to Gearhart Station, a 40-seat brew pub and specialty deli. The restaurant would replace the Gearhart Grocery on Pacific Way.

"If they can't prove a need for a brew pub, the City Council has grounds to deny a conditional use permit," Gearhart resident Jeanne Mark, one of

five signatories, said Tuesday.

"I feel that the residents were not informed about this issue and did not have time to even respond," 40-year Gearhart resident Susan Edy said. "There is no need for a brew pub, nor is the location of the market an appropriate place for a brew pub."

Earlier this month, planning commissioners voted 4-3 to OK the transition of the market to a brew pub.

Mark and her husband, Wilson, were joined by Edy, Vickie Abrahamson, Penny Sabol, Rick Sabol and Steven Weed in challenging the Planning Commission's decision, which they say was made with "minimal homeowner and resident comment regarding this major change in our

downtown community core."

The appeal was filed Tuesday at Gearhart City Hall, within the 15-day period to do so.

"It was really odd the way that it happened in the middle of winter, hardly anyone was present, it almost just kind of popped up, no warning to speak," Mark said. "This is a major, major thing that is going to affect the community. It's not just an 'Oh, by the way.'"

The idea of a brew pub goes against the comprehensive plan and the goal of keeping tourism down to a minimum, Mark said. "It takes out of the picture a grocery store that we really do need."

In their appeal, residents say approval of the permit

"sidesteps the intended purpose of the central city zone, to provide needed supporting services to the locals or resident community."

Mark Mead, who represents Molly and Terry Lowenberg, the owners of the Gearhart Grocery, told the Planning Commission earlier this month the grocery was unable to compete with chains both to the north and south of Gearhart. The Lowenbergs had unsuccessfully sought to sell the property before deciding to alter its use, Mead said. The family intends to close the market and remodel for the brew pub and deli.

Asked about the appeal Tuesday, Terry Lowenberg said he had "nothing to say."

# Gearhart short-term rental rules take shape

**Rental owners on notice about upcoming tax**

By R.J. Marx  
Seaside Signal

An additional room tax, business license and minimum rental terms are among the changes to Gearhart laws in an effort to curb issues with some short-term rentals. Property owners with short-term rentals received a letter about upcoming changes in city law, City Administrator Chad Sweet said. The notification establishes the first regulations for transient lodging, which is overnight occupancy of 30 days or less. The proposed ordinance requires short-term rental property owners to pay a 7 percent room tax, in addition to the 1 percent Oregon lodging tax, Sweet said. The tax goes into effect April 1, and is paid quarterly. A \$40 business license is also required by April 1.

About 85 owners of short-term rental properties have been contacted about the pro-

posed new rules. At a March Planning Commission work session, commissioners proposed a rule designating a minimum rental period of seven days. A public hearing is scheduled for April 14.

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