

Gearhart pursues short-term rentals lottery

Business permits could be limited to 35 properties

By R.J. Marx
Seaside Signal

GEARHART — The city of Gearhart sent notices to property owners in late March to notify residents of upcoming changes to the zoning code. They suggest a new short-term lodging rental policy that could lead to a lottery system like that in place in Cannon Beach, with limits on occupancy, parking restrictions and a requirement for emergency contact information.

The number of vacation rentals could be capped at 35 properties. There are 87 short-term rentals currently.

The rules are still in the discussion phase, and subject to change, City Administrator Chad Sweet said Thursday, April 4.

“Planning Commission and City Council are trying to minimize the impact of short-term rentals,” he said. “What seems to be happening is we see a growth of short-term rentals over the last two years that has brought this to a head.”

Tenancy limits

The nine-page document sent to Gearhart homeowners lists topics discussed in work sessions, including limits to transient occupancy and parking, neighbor notice and rules mandating garbage and septic service.

The code proposes a lottery system similar to Cannon Beach’s to limit the number of short-term rentals, capping the number at 35.



R.J. MARX PHOTO
Chad Sweet

Short-term rental permits would not be transferable. When a permit is revoked, the city would accept a new application by drawing from a waiting list of interested property owners.

Names of potential permit-holders would be drawn randomly. If a property owner can’t obtain a permit within 180 days, a new name would be drawn.

The code also specifies the dwelling “not exceed one individual tenancy within seven consecutive days.”

No additional occupancy, with the exception of the property owner or their guests, would be permitted within the seven-day period.

Transient-lodging owners must also provide a designated representative’s name, physical address, email address and phone number, and must be available at all times to “ensure a response to complaints regarding emergencies and the condition, oper-

ation, or conduct of the occupants.” Owners would be required to provide neighbors within a 200-foot radius with contact information, a parking plan and the city website where the information is also posted.

“Good neighbor” policies and emergency information would also be required.

‘Meat left on bone’

Sweet said the city is receiving letters on the short-term rental issue every day.

One letter in the April 6 City Council packet urged the board to “enact regulations that are being considered.”

Another advised the council to consider the noise, safety and destruction of “the neighborhood fabric,” as a result of short-term rentals.

Property owners and renters opposed to new rules said “a few disgruntled homeowners does not a problem make.”

Others asked the council to consider “responsible homeowners who care about Gearhart, their neighbors and take rentals seriously.”

Sweet said he expects up to 50 people at Thursday’s 6 p.m. meeting at the firehouse — chosen as a location because of the anticipated larger crowd.

“I think people should participate, based on two of the more restrictive items in the proposal draft, only 35 available permits and seven-day reservation blocks,” Sweet said. “That was added on fairly recently.”

As for the rules that will eventually be adopted, “Anything is an option,” he said.

“This is where we’re starting the discussion for the public meeting,” Sweet said. “We’ll see what survives and gets forwarded to the City Council. There will be meat left on the bone for the Planning Commission to adjust prior to pushing it up to the council.”

Rental owners

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“What I’d like to see them do is educate those who have short-term rentals, let everyone know what they expect as good neighbors,” Marshall said.

Schroeder said the number, and the threat, of short-term rentals is vastly overrated and the small number of vacation property owners — by the city’s estimate, about 75 to 80 — does not need to be regulated.

“People think there are lots of us,” Schroeder said.

The city has tried to prove higher numbers of short-term rentals in Gearhart, but in the last two years, the number of such homes has remained about the same, she said. Sixty-five percent of homes in Gearhart are secondary homes. Of those, it’s a small handful who rent.

Bad apples among homeowners would be dealt with by peer pressure, Schroeder said. “We know who they are.”

Rather than new rules, the city should do more to enforce existing regulations, and condos or apartments should have a manager who enforces rules on their properties.

“Gearhart has noise rules,” Schroeder said. “They can enforce the noise rules, the garbage rules, the parking rules. They’re already in the books, they’re in the city code.”

“In 28 years, not once have I ever had a letter from the city to say my party misbehaved, a party, or trash,” Marshall said.

Many of the complaints submitted to the city are undocumented or vague, Schroeder added, particularly complaints about garbage strewn about or noise from parties.

“How did they know it was short-term renters?” Schroeder asked. “They could very well be the owner using their own home.”

School is ‘in’ for Gearhart’s Christy Bisping

After closing in Cannon Beach, children’s center makes a fresh start

By R.J. Marx
Seaside Signal

Yes, she was blindsided. Who wouldn’t be? Christy Bisping was the executive director of the Cannon Beach Preschool and Children’s Center since June. Last month, she got word the center was suddenly closing.

She and board members had been unaware that the financial situation was so dire, Bisping said.

Competition from neighboring centers in Seaside, declining enrollment, long commutes and barriers for Hispanic students were among causes.

“We did know enrollment was dropping fairly quickly,” Bisping said. “There were no plans to put it back together until it was too late to fix.”

The center had been on the verge of closing before, in 2011, after years of losses, when it received an infusion from the city.

Despite a prestigious three-star rating early this year for its commitment to quality learning from Oregon’s Quality Rating and Improvement System, the center shut its doors.

Bisping, who lives in Gearhart with her husband Brandon, a 16-month-old daughter and 12-year-old niece, suddenly found herself out of a job.

She developed a concept — Gearhart Kids Academy — a certified children’s center offering infant, toddler, full-day and half-day programs for children six weeks to 12 years.

Bisping secured a building in her hometown on Highway 101 at the former site of



Christy Bisping

‘I don’t really believe in electronic toys. I think there should be purposeful play, purposeful items.’

Christy Bisping

North Coast Realty and took out a personal line of credit to finance her dream.

She said she sees a niche for the new center.

Curriculum will be based on the Montessori Method and the Creative Curriculum for preschoolers.

“I don’t really believe in electronic toys,” Bisping said. “I think there should be purposeful play, purposeful items. That’s where the Montessori inspiration comes. It’s very much arts, clay, bringing things outdoors inside. But there will be play, too, because that’s important for social development.”

Come meet the team

The Gearhart Kids Academy is located at 3537 Highway 101 in Gearhart; 503-440-8560; gearhartkids.com. There will be a gathering to meet the Gearhart Kids Academy team at Warrenton grade school cafeteria Saturday, April 16, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

WHAT: “Meet the Team”
WHERE: Warrenton grade school cafeteria
WHEN: Saturday, April 16, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
CONTACT: 503-440-8560; gearhartkids.com.

Hours will be from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. “We hope to have kids going all day long,” she said.

Staffing at the new center came with some difficult choices.

There were four teachers at Cannon Beach Preschool, but “right now I can only take one of them, Susan James, who was there the longest, four years,” Bisping said. “But my goal would be to take all four of them. They’re all wonderful, so it’s very hard.”

Fees will be fixed and on a monthly basis — “very competitive to the other children’s center that’s in town, a little bit less,” she said.

A Gearhart volunteer firefighter, Bisping will offer emergency medical service, fire and police families a 10 percent discount on tuition. Capacity will be 46. School starts May 2.

For more information, visit gearhartkids.com.

Academy still hopeful for fall opening

Academy from Page 1A

The school district denied the academy’s proposal several times, citing the lack of an adequate location and not enough startup funds.

In October, the Seaside School District board of directors unanimously approved a three-year contract with Cannon Beach Academy. Under the conditions, the charter school would serve at least 44 kindergarten and first-grade students its first year. More grades could be added over time.

The charter school planned to open in fall at a temporary location at 171 Sunset Blvd., in a space that once housed the Cannon Beach Athletic Club.

‘Artificial barriers’

In their letter, the academy board said they did not view the district’s conditions as reasonable or appropriate when adopted. Board members were dismayed the district did not include the

academy in reviewing and addressing the conditions before board approval.

However, the academy trusted the school district “would be reasonable” in considering the conditions.

The academy stated the conditions were imposed to “erect artificial barriers” to the charter school.

“We trust we are incorrect in drawing this conclusion,” board members wrote.

One condition required the school have “all the money they need for the 2016-17 school year” in the bank, as well as a 10-percent contingency, amounting to about \$450,000.

The academy had \$145,798 by March 1, falling more than \$300,000 short.

Academy board members said the school “has reasonably and appropriately demonstrated financial stability based on its cash at hand, pledges, and the projected revenue that will come from public funding of the charter school.”

The funds raised and pledges received “demonstrates an enormous level of community support for the school,” academy directors said.

Enrollment fell short

The academy also objected to the school district’s condition of 22 students enrolled in a district kindergarten class.

The district required a minimum of 22 enrolled students in both kindergarten and first-grade classes. Sixteen first-graders were enrolled as of March 1.

Superintendent Doug Dougherty and Superintendent-elect Sheila Roley said without enough students, the district would be unable to make necessary adjustments in programs, class size and staffing.

The academy also lacked a state-approved English language learners program by proposing an outdated program, Dougherty and Roley wrote.

According to academy members, the academy had developed a program using information from the Oregon Department of Education that they “reasonably believed” to be state-approved, board members wrote. The error is “immaterial” and “easily corrected.”

Academy board members said the district’s decision was “neither reasonable or lawful.”

“Oregon law does not provide for conditional approval and the purported conditions which are alleged to have not been met are themselves unreasonable and inconsistent with the spirit and intent of Oregon’s charter school law,” they wrote.

Despite the March decision to revoke approval, Dougherty and Roley stated that the district remained committed to seeing the charter school up and running and that Cannon Beach Academy could begin operating in fall 2017, if it meets the conditions.

AAUW fundraiser honors Whitney Westerholm

Spring into Fashion Seaside AAUW Scholarship Fundraiser takes place Saturday, May 7, from 2 to 4 p.m. at the Astoria Golf and Country Club, 33445 Sunset Beach Road in Warrenton. Tickets are \$25; \$15, students. They may be purchased at By the Way in Gearhart, Beach Books in Seaside, from an AAUW member, at the door or by phone 503-717-2353.

This year’s event honors “breaking through barriers” graduating senior Whitney Westerholm. This award is given to a local woman or girl who exemplifies AAUW’s mission in a manner that has had a demonstrative impact on our city’s women and girls in the area of equity and education. This is the first year Seaside AAUW has chosen to participate and honor a young woman from our community. Whitney exemplifies the mission and goal of equity for girls, has had an impact on the girls and women of Seaside by her sports accomplishments,



SUBMITTED PHOTO/SEASIDE SIGNAL
Whitney Westerholm

has demonstrated a need for new schools outside the tsunami zone by the “Don’t Catch this Wave” campaign, and has been highly visible in these pursuits in the local press and Portland television.

Whitney graduates from Seaside High School June 13 and will work over the summer. She has applied to University of California Davis and intends to become a vintner.

New chief executive, four full-time specialists join Providence Seaside Hospital

By Nancy McCarthy
For EO Media Group

A new chief executive and four doctors are joining Providence Seaside Hospital.

The hospital’s chief executive, Kendall Sawa, RN, who began work at the hospital in January, introduced the four new doctors during a reception Wednesday, April 6.

Sawa came to Providence Seaside from Ocean Beach

Hospital, in Ilwaco, Washington, where he was chief executive since 2012.

He formerly served as vice president for patient care services at PeaceHealth Ketchikan Medical Center, before taking the helm of Ocean Beach Hospital under a management agreement between the public hospital district and PeaceHealth to manage daily operations. The agreement expired last Dec. 31.

Sawa said the newly hired

doctors added to the specialty services at Providence Seaside. He acknowledged the need for more primary care doctors but added that hospitals throughout the U.S. are challenged to find primary doctors and it is even more difficult for rural hospitals, such as Providence Seaside.

All of the new specialists will work full time at Providence Seaside and will live in the area, Sawa said. “Some have even bought houses,”

he added. The new specialists are:

- Brook Benze, M.D., orthopedic surgery: Benze is board certified in orthopedic surgery with a subspecialty in sports medicine. He received his medical degree from Oregon Health & Science University and completed an internship at Maricopa County Medical Center in Phoenix, Arizona.
- Christopher Nyte, D.O., otolaryngology: Nyte special-

izes in treatment of disorders of the ears, nose and throat and facial plastic surgery. His interests include skin cancer, nasal obstruction and therapeutic use of Botox for migraines. He received his medical degree at the A.T. Still University School of Osteopathic Medicine in Missouri.

• Laura Gordon, M.D., urology: Gordon earned her medical degree from Northwestern University Medical School in Chicago.

She interned in surgery and completed a residency in urology at the University of California, Los Angeles. She provides surgical and non-surgical care for conditions involving the urinary tract.

• Dale J. Veith, P.S.Y.D., psychology: Veith received his degree from Pacific University School of Professional Psychology and also completed a residency there. He has been a psychologist for 19 years.