

# Gearhart Grocery makes way for brew pub

**Challenge likely as councilors approve switch**

By R.J. Marx  
Seaside Signal

GEARHART — City councilors in Gearhart opened the way for a new brew pub Tuesday, May 3, approving a conditional use permit for Gearhart Station at 599 Pacific Way.

In a three-hour hearing at the Gearhart firehouse, owner Terry Lowenberg of Sum Properties in Seaside told councilors the Gearhart Grocery could not compete with Fred Meyer, Safeway and Costco.

“We sell raw food now,” Lowenberg said. “Raw food is not a sustainable thing in this community.”

Lowenberg said alternative food choices, such as organic vegetables or specialty products, had not been successful with customers.

“People say they wanted it, we bought it, and we ended up eating it ourselves,” he said. “We thought about what we could do to make it better, to make it a profitable business.”

Lowenberg said the brew pub would be limited to retail sales only. “We’re not looking to put in a Fort George or Buoy Beer.”

## Planning approval

In March, planning commissioners voted 4-3 to OK the transition of the grocery to a 1,300-square-foot brew pub. The 40-seat pub — defined as a cafe under city zoning code — would include nine tables seating four people each, with four seats at a bar area. Brewing operations would be separated from diners by a glass partition.

Opponents said the brew pub is contrary to Gearhart’s comprehensive plan, citing 1994 goals to limit commercial activity in the city and to prevent the city from



R.J. MARX/SEASIDE SIGNAL

**Gearhart Grocery owner Terry Lowenberg addresses the public hearing.**



R.J. MARX/SEASIDE SIGNAL

**Jeanne Mark, who opposed the brew pub, spoke during the hearing.**



R.J. MARX/SEASIDE SIGNAL

**Gearhart Grocery employee Alyssa Logan urges the council to endorse the transition to a brew pub.**

becoming a tourist destination. They said septic facilities are inadequate and the city needs to retain its only grocery store.

After the Planning Commission granted conditional approval, the decision was appealed to the City Council by five Gearhart residents.

## Decision upheld

At Tuesday night’s hearing, residents were divided into “pro-brew pub” speakers and those who spoke against the plan.

Gearhart’s Jeff Roberts said he was “severely disappointed” by opposition to the brew pub.

“Our well wishes cannot keep a business afloat, only our dollars can, and to date we are not helping the owners keep a viable business,” Roberts said.

Roberts said many arguments against the brew pub were “patently ridiculous.”

Grocery employee Cathryn Roe, an Astoria resident, said she had worked at the market for more than two years.

“We really do support the growth and change of Gearhart,” Roe said. “Keep in mind growth and change is not a bad thing, but a good thing.”

Alyssa Logan of Astoria, a five-year grocery employee, said

grocery earnings had “plummeted.”

“While I love a lot of our frequent shoppers, they just don’t shop with us enough,” Logan said.

## In opposition

Availability of other suitable sites owned by the Lowenbergs on U.S. Highway 101 should be considered, said Gearhart resident Jeanne Mark, one of those who filed the appeal to the Planning Commission decision.

Former Gearhart mayor Kent Smith said it was “hard to imagine” Gearhart without a grocery.

*‘While I love a lot of our frequent shoppers, they just don’t shop with us enough.’*

Gearhart Grocery employee Alyssa Logan

“A brewery is very close to being an industrial activity in a commercial zone,” Smith said.

Gearhart’s Rick Sabol said the Planning Commission decision was based on “inconclusive investigation of the facts,” without dia-

grams, a business or parking plan and no public need discussed or established.

“It is abundantly clear due diligence was lacking before a vote was called,” Sabol said. “There’s no need for another bar in Gearhart. Let’s keep Gearhart Gearhart.”

Councilor Dan Jesse asked Lowenberg if he intended to keep and run the establishment himself, or to have someone else run the business.

“Am I building it to sell?” Lowenberg said. “No. I’m building it for myself.”

Councilors Jesse, Sue Lorain and Paulina Cockrum voted for the brew pub’s conditional approval.

Councilor Kerry Smith was the lone vote in opposition. Mayor Diane Widdop was not present.

Requirements for the business include a 10 p.m. closing, retail sales only and Department of Environmental Quality permits, among other conditions.

Tuesday’s decision could be appealed to the state’s Land Use Board of Appeals.

“We’ll process this, but it’s something we’ll definitely consider challenging, because we have enough material to have LUBA consider our position,” Mark said after the meeting.

# Seaside Chamber announces new executive director

**Owen was formerly the marketing director at a local title company**

By R.J. Marx  
Seaside Signal

Brian Owen will leave his job as marketing director at Seaside’s Tigor Title to assume the executive director post at Seaside Chamber of Commerce.

“What a great fit,” chamber President Sadie Mercer said in announcing the decision. “We’re pretty thrilled. We had other applicants — and Brian by far dominated in interviews as the strongest candidate.”

The chamber had been without a director since early March, when Susan Huntington stepped down from the role she had held since 2013.

Owen stepped down as Seaside Chamber president to pursue the job.

“On a personal level, the volunteerism is always what drives me,” Owen said. “But the business level itself is what helped me to make the choice to leave title and escrow.”

“Brian is a really personable guy,” Mercer said. “He makes friends and contacts really easily. He’s very easy to talk to.”

Mercer described Owen as “very business-minded.”

“When he was president, he had big ideas for changing the chamber, restructuring it a little bit and showing the benefits to the businesses,” Mercer said. “He had that plan laid out.”

The board’s decision to select Owen was unanimous, Mercer added. He begins May 16.

Owen worked at Tigor Title since 2013. Prior to that he was the business development specialist for First American Title & Escrow.

A longtime volunteer and board member, Owen was chairman of the board for McMinnville Area Chamber of Commerce in 2007 and in 2005 was honored as their chamber volunteer of the year.

Owen assisted with Seaside Chamber’s Beach Volleyball Tournament and Pouring at the Coast events for the past two years.

From previous experience, Owen said he learned how to build a volunteer base, manage volunteers and expand both community and business growth.

“The more I thought about it, the duties of the job itself was a personal fit with what I want to do with my life, my aspirations and my value system,” Owen said.

He plans to retain current staff along with annual events such as the volleyball tournament, Hood to Coast and Pouring at the Coast.

Owen said the chamber should be a “referral generator” for local businesses and improve digital communications on the web and social media platforms.

“I think we can redo that and make that a huge member — and community — benefit,” he said.

The local chamber could also play a role in politics, Owen said. “Chambers of commerce are powerhouses with national and state government. I believe we should make sure that we are a communication hub for any action that would impact our businesses.”



**Brian Owen, the new executive director of the Seaside Chamber of Commerce.**

## RETHINKING BEACHES

# Naturalist raises awareness about ‘amazing phenomenon’

By Lyra Fontaine  
EO Media Group

Many use Oregon’s sandy shores for recreational fun in the sun, and there’s nothing wrong with that, local naturalist and nature photographer Neal Maine said in his April 13 lecture, “Beaches: More than Sand.”

With the increase in visitors, Maine said a greater understanding of lively ecological processes and “the wonder of this amazing phenomenon” happening on beaches is needed.

He wants to change public perception of Oregon’s beaches, which

were made accessible to the public, protected from private development and administered as a state recreation area in 1967.

“We’re trying to recast the beaches of Oregon as ecosystems, not just playgrounds,” Maine said to a rapt audience gathered in the Cannon Beach Chamber Hall as part of the city’s “12 Days of Earth Day” events.

With his late wife, Karen, Maine started the Haystack Rock Awareness Program, which began an official program in 1985. Last year, the program celebrated 30 years of educating visitors about the iconic rock.

Now, Maine hopes to help develop a strategic campaign called “Beaches are Alive” to raise public awareness about beach ecology. For example, instead of showing visitors how to clam, state parks could provide lessons about beach ecology, Maine said.

He invited the audience to send “ideas, observations and inspiration” for the possible program this spring.

As Maine demonstrated with photos and animated dialogue, beaches are living systems home to a wide variety of creatures, including mole crabs, clams, tiny invertebrates, kelp, birds and more.

Beaches are unique in that they are influenced by external input sources, like material from the ocean.

“The richer your awareness about the environment and how it works,” he said, “then the higher the quality of life.”

Maine displayed photos of some beach-dwelling creatures, including Velella velellas, an example of “population explosion.”

“You’ve seen more than you’ve ever wanted to see,” he said.

Meanwhile, razor clams, with their quick burrowing into the sand, are an example of biological specialization. “They have evolved for that specific habitat.”

## NEWS BRIEFS



SEASIDE SIGNAL/SUBMITTED PHOTO

**Volunteer book sorters prepare donated books for the annual North Tillamook Library book sale on Memorial Day weekend in Manzanita.**

## Memorial Day book sale returns to Manzanita

An annual Memorial Day tradition plays out May 27 and 28 in Manzanita, as the North Tillamook Library hosts its book sale featuring thousands donated books. It’s a sale that has become so big in recent years that it’s at two locations: The Hoffman Center for the Arts and Pine Grove Community House three blocks away.

The sale begins Friday, May 27, from 5 to 7 p.m. Members of the Friends of the Library get first crack at this year’s selection.

Nonmembers can join the evening of the presale, \$10 for an in-

dividual membership and \$15 for a family.

Saturday, May 28, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. the general public is invited to comb the shelves and tables for good deals on “gently used” books. Manzanita book sale returns Memorial Day weekend

The books at the Hoffman Center are non-fiction and include cookbooks, biographies, humor, nature, gardening, history, religion, self-help, reference, general interest and coffee table books. One can find fiction books at the Pine Grove Community House, including novels, mysteries, science fiction, poetry, romances and children’s books.

The book sale, held every year over the Memorial Day weekend, is the major fundraiser for the North Tillamook County Friends to provide maintenance to the Manzanita library. The books have been donated by members of the community, and volunteers sort and price them year-round.

Hoffman Center for the Arts is located at 549 Laneda Ave., Manzanita; the Pine Grove Community House is located at 225 Laneda Ave.

## Learn to play ukulele at the Seaside Library

Join the Seaside Public Library Saturday, May 14, at 1 p.m. and learn to play the ukulele at the Ukalaliens workshop, which is sponsored by the Friends of the Seaside Library. Sign-up required at the circulation desk or by phone.

Musician-teachers Kate Power and Steve Einhorn travel in Johnny Appleseed fashion from town

to town to introduce the fun of playing the ukulele.

They will bring 30 ukuleles for participants to use and will teach beginners, in a friendly atmosphere, how to play these simple instruments.

The mission of the Ukalaliens workshop is to grow budding musicians from scratch through ukulele and to give the uke-curious the opportunity to play the little musical powerhouse that is the ukulele.

The Seaside Public Library is located at 1131 Broadway. For more information call 503-738-6742 or visit seadeslibrary.org.

## Conservancy leader speaks in D.C.

North Coast Land Conservancy Executive Director Katie Voelke returned from a week in Washington, D.C., advocating on behalf of the national Land Trust Alliance and the Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts — her first such trip to the nation’s capital. In Washington she spoke to members of Oregon’s congressional delegation, advocating for continued support of key federal conservation programs such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Voelke presented both Rep. Earl Blumenauer and Sen. Ron Wyden with an award from the Land Trust Alliance recognizing their leadership in making the Conservation Easement Tax Incentive permanent.

Immediately upon her return to Oregon, Voelke received the Gaylord Nelson Award from the City of Cannon Beach at the city’s annual 12 Days of Earth Day potluck, in recognition of her many years promoting environmental awareness and protection. The award is

named for the Wisconsin senator who founded Earth Day in 1970 and who sponsored significant environmental legislation during his term in office, from 1963 to 1983.



Kristin Grorud-Colvert

## Exploring Oregon’s ocean presentation

Join marine ecologist Kirsten Grorud-Colvert, Ph.D., for a wide-ranging talk about the sea beside us in a presentation titled “Into the Deep: Exploring Oregon’s Ocean” Wednesday, May 18, at 6 p.m. at the Seaside Public Library. It is the final program in the 2016 Listening to the Land speaker series, which this year has focused on the theme of water. Admission is free; refreshments are served.

Grorud-Colvert will provide a look at underwater reefs as she discusses upwelling and its role in the productivity of our ocean. She will address challenges such as sea star wasting syndrome and ocean hypoxia, or “dead zones.”

Grorud-Colvert is on the faculty of Oregon State University, where

she has studied marine systems and ocean organisms from the Florida Keys to the near-shore ocean off Oregon. She uses data from many different marine species and habitats to look at what happens when you protect an area in the ocean and what we can learn from these areas in order to design even better protection. She also directs the Science of Marine Reserves Project, a team of marine ecologists, graphic designers, communication specialists and marine reserve scientists around the globe developing effective ways to share scientific data about marine reserves with the general public.

Listening to the Land is an annual winter speaker series presented monthly by North Coast Land Conservancy and the Necanicum Watershed Council in partnership with the Seaside Public Library.

## SERP launches Learning Ladder

Sunset Empire Recreation and Parks District preschool program, the Learning Ladder, will be planting in a class garden box in the newly expanded community garden. Master gardener Barbara Hassan will be on hand.

The mission is “PLAY.” Positive Life Activities. A public grand unveiling takes place Wednesday, June 8, from 4 to 5:30 p.m. The after-school program children and their families will be joining for the special event.

Contact Shelly Saunders, Early Childhood Manager, 503-738-3311, ext 125.