

# Seaside Convention Center set to grow

## Convention Center opens reservation books to 2025

By R.J. Marx  
Seaside Signal

Got a convention in 2025? Now you can book it at the Seaside Civic and Convention Center.

The City Council gave the convention center approval to move forward with plans for an expansion and renovation project.

"This gives us the ability to open our calendars up to 2020-2025 knowing we have the consensus of the council and mayor, if we are successful in the funding process," said Russ Vandenberg, the center's general manager. "It means the council supports our recommendation to renovate and add additional space to the center."

Costs are projected at \$14.6 million, and could be paid by bonds sold by the city, backed by a 2-percent increase in the city's room tax.

Vandenberg said he not only hopes to recruit larger groups, but to keep current clients.

"They've grown over the last 25, 30 years and we haven't added any space in 25 years," he said.

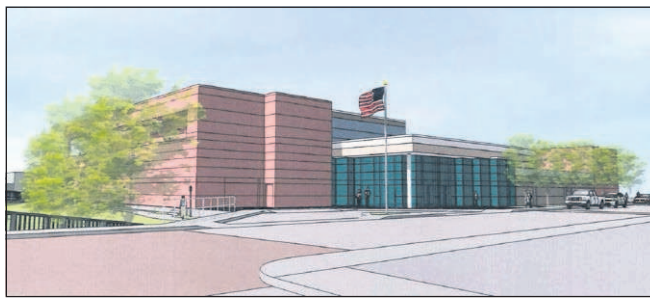
The construction project would add about 10,000 square feet to the existing 62,000-square-foot facility, and renovate more than 13,000 square feet of the current space.

The plan allows the city to be "architect of its own destiny," Vandenberg said.

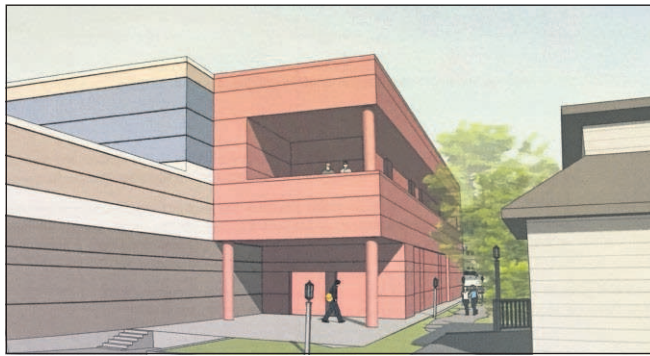
At earlier meetings, Vandenberg said the expansion would meet requirements of 60 percent of the organizations within a 300-mile radius of Seaside and increase market penetration by 20 percent.

The project will allow larger and more diverse groups to use the center, he said, filling a need not only for the convention center, but the entire downtown business community.

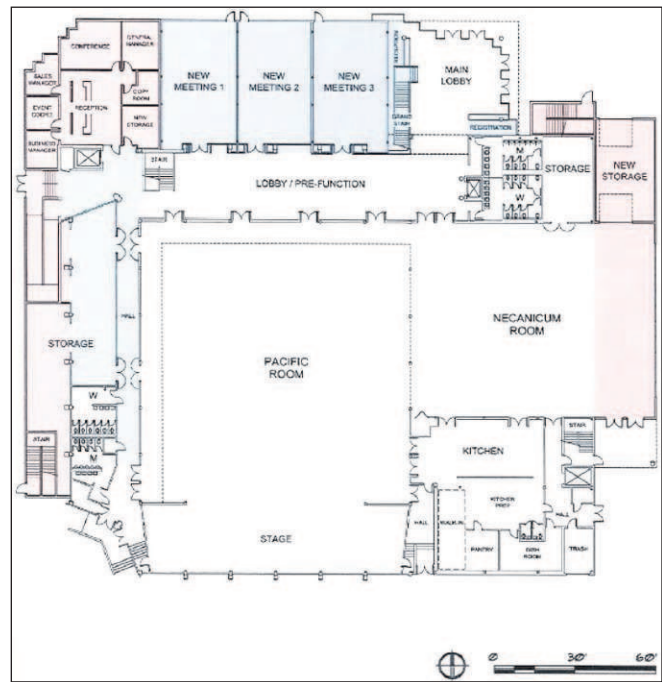
The convention's last expansion in 1991 was funded by an increase in the room tax. Mayor Don Larson called



Proposed renovation plans for the exterior of the Seaside Civic and Convention Center.



A rendering of the convention center's southeast corner.



Renovation plans for the main floor of the Seaside Civic and Convention Center.

the convention center plans an "amazing presentation for an amazing structure."

"We're firing the starting gun," Councilor Jay Barber said as councilors unanimous-

ly approved the go-ahead.

After financing approvals, the renovation's design phase could take six months and construction up to two years, Vandenberg said.

# Charter is last link in repair project

Charter from Page 1A

"It's very frustrating because we're so close," Public Works Director Dale McDowell told the Seaside City Council last week. "Right now we're just waiting on Charter. We're ready to finish this thing off. We've called headquarters every day, twice a day, told them you've got to get more people out here."

Until Charter's equipment is down, the city is unable to start sidewalks and landscapes, Seaside City Engineer Geoff Liljenwall said. "It's an inconvenience to the tourists, it's an inconvenience to the residents."

"They had their fiber optic trucks out there today," he said this morning. "They've had people out there each day during the work week, but I really can't tell you if there's an uptick of activity."

The \$3.4 million North Holladay Drive project began in mid-January, and impacted homeowners, businesses, bus routes, pedestrians, vehicles and utilities.

Workmen replaced existing sewer, water and force



Cable must be removed from wires before poles can be taken down.

mains before reconnecting water and sewer services. Plans called for the installation of underground vaults and conduits for conversion of the existing overhead utilities — including electrical, telephone and cable — to underground utilities.

The cable is the last utility to be removed before poles are taken out and landscaping and sidewalks can be completed.

"They should be done by now," Liljenwall said. "By the end of July, they should

**'They should be done by now.... We've been really having to struggle to get them to respond.'**

Geoff Liljenwall,  
Seaside city engineer

have started and they should have been done by the third week in August. We have great weather right now, but as everyone knows the weather could change in September and October. Asphalt plants might not be open in October when we're done."

Repeated calls from the city up the corporate ladder failed to yield results, Liljenwall said. He said he was passed from the company office in Astoria to another branch in Kennewick, Washington. "I don't even have a firm date," he said. "We've been really having to struggle to get them to respond."

After that conversation, The Daily Astorian reached out to Charter Cable.

They referred the newspaper to a regional communica-

tions office in San Diego for comment.

On Thursday morning, Liljenwall received a call from a subcontractor with news that cable trucks were on their way. "The subcontractor said he's 'gonna have three trucks of these, three trucks of those,'" Liljenwall said. "He said they should be done before Labor Day."

By midmorning, about a dozen cable workers could be seen up and down North Holladay Drive.

"We have been in contact with the city and recently partnered with a third-party contractor in order to expedite this project," Charter's Bret Picciolo said via email Thursday. "We plan to have all work completed within the next two weeks."

"I guess from all my calls and the newspaper, they were out there in force today," Liljenwall said.

Is he confident Charter can meet the Labor Day completion date?

"The proof is in the pudding," he said. "We don't know. I can't believe anything until I touch it or see it."

# Horning urges focus on bridge readiness

Horning from Page 1A

that we need to make this the equivalent of a war footing."

Horning was elected to the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District board eight years ago and continues to serve in that role. He is a Seaside planning commissioner and former member of the parks advisory committee. A member of the board of directors of the North Coast Land Conservancy, he is a founder of the city's tsunami advisory group.

Horning works as a geological consultant based in Seaside.

"The tsunami advisory group gave the city of Seaside a tsunami strategic investment plan," he said. "It established the scenario we thought they should be planning for. We gave them a timeline, we gave them a budget and proposed a mechanism in which the city could

raise funds. They said 'thanks,' and the next words out of their mouths were, 'now let's move on to more important stuff.'"

Replacing the city's bridges could save thousands of lives, he said.

"Right now there are so many bridges that will collapse people will be stranded and won't be able to get to safety," he said. "They will be killed. The obvious thing to do is construct bridges as fast as you can."

Replacement of the city's most vulnerable crossings could be completed at a cost of about \$50 million and save thousands of lives, he said. The city should start looking at funding mechanisms now, with options including added fees for water bills, road levies or outside funds from state and federal governments. "If we can't get money from outside, we need to tax ourselves," he said.

**'I think the school bond ought to be delayed until the bridges are fixed.... It's well-meaning, but it's backward.'**

Tom Horning

Seaside needs to show some "skin in the game" when approaching state and federal agencies for funds, Horning said, "to show we're doing everything we can and still can't pull it off."

A Seaside School District bond vote is expected to ask voters for nearly \$100 million to raise money for a new school campus outside the tsunami zone.

Horning is not sure that's not putting the cart before the horse.

"I think the school bond ought to be delayed until the

bridges are fixed," he said.

"The odds are very good students won't be in school when it hits. Wouldn't it be something to have an earthquake hit on a weekend, when no kids are in school, no lives are saved through the school district and then we let everybody else in town die because we haven't built bridges yet? It's well-meaning, but it's backward."

Whether schools or bridges take precedence, the city needs to take action.

"The tsunami is possibly going to happen in our lives," he said. "We need to be ready for it. We're morally obligated to get on with it."

City Councilor Randy Frank, meanwhile, is running for re-election in Wards 1 and 2 and Councilor Seth Morrisey is bidding for a second term in Ward 4.

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