

Student voices add urgency to bond vote



R.J. MARX/SEASIDE SIGNAL

Seaside student leaders Kara Ipson, Lizzy Barnes and Emma Dutcher hope to raise awareness of the tsunami threat.

It used to be called the barbershop circuit. When guys hung around in vinyl-covered metal chairs reading *Field & Stream*. You could be sure that whatever news — and whatever opinions around it — would be fully explored in their entirety, although not always without embellishment.

Something went very wrong for Seaside School District bond supporters in 2013. That was the first go-around in the drive to move three schools — Seaside High School, Broadway Middle School and Gearhart Elementary School — from the tsunami inundation zone to safety. Proposed only six days after the closure of Cannon Beach Elementary School, the bond measure would have created a new 50-acre campus at a location to be determined after the vote.

With a substantial turnout in an off-year election, of the 11 voting precincts in the school district, only one, Precinct 40, passed the measure, and it did so by a mere 12 votes;

Here's what I heard in the barbershop about that bond:

The proposal was oversized, indulgent and ill-timed. The school district couldn't be trusted to stick to a budget. High property taxes would force residents from their homes.

And don't they always overstate the risk?

Add to that a few more ill-tempered comments, personal or otherwise, and you might be plenty lathered up.

Dire need

The barbershop topic this year — heard from Gearhart to Cannon Beach — is the \$99.7 million bond to move Seaside schools out of the tsunami zone.

Gearhart Elementary School, Broadway Middle School and Seaside High School were built with an expected lifespan of 45 to 50 years, according to district Superintendent-emeritus Doug Dougherty. Each school building has been used beyond that span — they're unsafe, deteriorating and inefficient.

At Broadway Middle School, students sit in classroom structures with aging utilities, cinder block construction and walls torn by horizontal shearing.

Gearhart Elementary school's gym is riddled with dry rot and "would collapse in an earthquake," Dougherty, who has volunteered his time to supporting passage of the bond. Leaks are so bad in the 68-year-old school, "It's pretty much like playing whack-a-mole, where you are pretty sure the leak is not coming directly from the spot it's leaking from. Often it's many feet away and trying to track it down is very, very difficult."

At Seaside High School, classrooms are water-damaged and pipes covered with asbestos. Mold fills storage areas. An oil boiler is inefficient and must be "patched together" to remain functional. On rainy days, leaks quickly fill large garbage cans — "everything from slow drips to streams of water."

Then and now

In 2013 local residents were unprepared — or unimpressed — by the Cascadia subduction zone threat.

In 2013, supporters said the proposed campus would "capture an aesthetic that reflects the communities within the

Seaside School District." Today there is no talk of aesthetics. No Cadillac plan or gold-plated doorknobs. Proponents are focused on the dire risk and the state of crumbling schools — along with coastal risk, each of the three schools in Seaside's tsunami zone face critical needs for infrastructure repairs, from roof leaks to mold.

Barbershop conversation is less about denying the potential tsunami risk, but how to prepare for it.

We've had a few more years to contemplate the tsunami threat, and as geologist Tom Horning says, "Get our heads out of the sand." Science is catching up with fears, and it is apparent that our risk for tsunami on the coast is not if but when.

Bonnie Henderson's book "The Next Tsunami" traced the history of our ecosystem and outlined the severity of our risk. Last year Kathryn Schulz magnified those concerns in a *New Yorker* magazine piece that won the Pulitzer Prize for nonfiction writing. New numbers from Oregon State University researchers show that tsunami interval frequency is even greater than previously thought.

Property owners would pay \$1.35 per \$1,000 of assessed property value, as opposed to \$1.86 in 2013. Low interest rates work in the district's favor.

Because of the luck of the draw, Seaside could see further cost reductions. The district is first in line for an additional \$4 million in state aid lottery funds and considered likely to win them.

Instead of a vague, unknown location in the hills, this time the district has land on 80 acres south of Seaside Heights Elementary School. Better yet, residents don't have to pay for it — it's a gift from timber giant Weyerhaeuser Co. The new K-12 campus site plan is modest: showing a new high school, middle school, gymnasium and cafeteria. Main entryways for the middle and high schools are demarcated, as well as roadways, bus drop-off areas, parking and athletic fields.

No helipad. No theater. No gold-plated doorknobs.

The catch: The funds are contingent on the district passing the bond.

The next generation

Even if lifelong residents can't be persuaded, a new generation can. They're taking the lead. In 2015 Seaside High School students founded the "Don't Catch This Wave" campaign.

They shared their compelling personal statements on the web, social media, to students, faculty, legislators in the state and beyond.

This year the torch is carried by a new class of motivated students, among them, Seaside City Council student representative Lizzy Barnes and Associated Student Body co-presidents Emma Dutcher and Kara Ipson. Lizzy Barnes, the high school's student representative on the City Council, also shares their goals of raising community awareness of the Cascadia threat.

The school bond is foremost on their minds.

"Think about the children," Barnes said.

"Think about the future and beyond yourselves," Dutcher added. "It might not affect us graduating, but it will affect those coming up."

My barbershop comment: It's one thing to make a decision by choice to enter a burning building. It's another to be under 18 and told you have no alternative.

SEEN FROM SEASIDE

R.J. MARX



Everybody loves a parade in Seaside

The first choir practice of September almost coincided with my birthday. As a participant for many years, they invited me to a pizza party prior to practice.

I walked both ways to church in the evening hours — a workout for me. I missed the Sixth Avenue turnout coming home so I kept on going to 10th. On the way, Tessa Beardsley came out of her house along with her mother Gerry

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Jandrall Beardsley. Tessa walked me the rest of the way home, being the nice girl that she is. We go back a long way to the Seaside Clinic when she came in as a tad with a broken leg. So much water under the bridge. It was an interesting moonlit night. I had watched the two big helicopters go over — always a thrill. I saw my first one many years ago. At that time it was called an autogyro.

It was so good to realize that the telephone poles were gone and the overhead wires although there is still no light. I do detest the metal boxes, which are the new way to store electrical equipment — I think. Maybe they should be covered with ruffled petticoats, Ha, or ivy or honeysuckle. The green color itself is so ugly, although future plantings will help come. When will we have the parade? (Just walking citizens, if need be.) Maybe by Thanksgiving. It's hard to make predictions in such a case when so many deadlines have already passed.

On the 9/11 weekend, I had several family members come to town — a son and daughter; A daughter-in-law; a granddaughter and her husband. We were quite busy. They took me out for breakfast, lunch and a birthday dinner, which was "YOOP" for me. My son had ordered a cake and when the kids sang happy birthday to me, several patrons in the restaurant joined in. I think some clapped. It was cool, even though I had to get old to deserve it. If one celebrates her birthday for three days, does that mean she's three years older? Yikes! One of my meals out was at the Buoy Beer Co. in Astoria. My pretty redheaded granddaughter took Robin and me. This time there were three sea lions at the viewing station, under Plexiglas below the restaurant. One was a tremendous size and a fracas over napping territory ensued. I froze at dinner because a door to the river was open throughout our stay.

As I've told you, I had a lot of company for my birthday. I was honored, pampered and entertained, but it was a great disappointment to me, too, to have missed the Legion picnic on 9/11. I look forward to that event every year, having been a member of the auxiliary for 69 years. And they always have strawberry shortcake not used at the Fourth of July celebration. Dam!

Laugh Lines

Wife: "You know that new car you bought me, Harry? It won't start."

Harry: "What do you mean? Why won't it start?"

Wife: "I think there's water in the carburetor."

Harry: "Good grief, woman. You don't know a carburetor from a tail pipe. I'll check it. Where is that car, anyway?"

Wife: "It's in the swimming pool!" (Courtesy of John Hagee.)

OBITUARIES

Freida Johnson

Nov. 4, 1914 — Sept. 10, 2016

Freida Johnson of Seaside died Saturday, Sept. 10, 2016, in Seaside. Mrs. Johnson was born Nov. 4, 1914 in Alma, Kansas, to Frederick and Jennie Flukinger. The family moved to Seaside when she was a small child. She graduated from Central School and Seaside High School, where she played the solo trumpet in the Seaside "All Girls Marching Band."

Freida met Howard E. Johnson at the Bungalow Dance Hall on Broadway in Seaside. They were married in the United Methodist Church on May 23, 1937.

Freida's life was always full of music. She played several instruments, notably piano, accordion and trumpet. She was a Sherman Clay certified teacher. Her earnings as a professional musician purchased a 1938 Chevrolet dump truck that was the start of Howard E. Johnson Construction. In retirement, Howard and Freida enjoyed many years of winter months in Mesa, Arizona where once again Freida played in a band, "The Arizona Acres Melody Makers."

Freida's life was about family, faith, music and the beautiful Tropicana roses and flowers she shared with family and friends.



Freida Johnson

She is survived by her three sons and daughters-in-law, Ron and Janette, Larry and Sharon and Bruce and Terri Johnson; a daughter, Bonnie Doney; 10 grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren; a sister and brother-in-law, Bonnie and Ken Bulletset; a sister-in-law, Alice Flukinger; and numerous nieces and nephews. She was predeceased by her husband, Howard E. Johnson; and brother, Harold Flukinger.

A memorial service was held at Seaside United Methodist Church on Saturday, Sept. 24. A reception followed at the church. Interment is private.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Seaside United Methodist Church, or a charity of one's choice.

LETTERS

Process alone doesn't mean democracy has been served

One week ago, Gearhart's City Council passed an ordinance regulating less than 5 percent of Gearhart homeowners who rent their homes on a short-term basis. In getting the ordinance passed, the mayor and the city administrator applauded themselves in bull-dogging a

process, and thereby claiming that democracy had been served.

The mayor even stated that passing the ordinance was "something we (the council) wanted to do" ("Gearhart gives new rental rules a go," *The Daily Astorian*, Sept. 8). Don't let that "we" slip by you. It has been the focus of the whole process the past several years. The "we" is not the

citizens, but the mayor, other council members and the city administrator.

Following a process in and of itself does not satisfy the ends of democracy. If it did, there would be no reason for citizens to claim an abuse of process. The purpose of process is to consider facts and hear input from the public. Elected and appointed government officials are not expected to

be experts on everything, and particularly volunteer, unpaid elected officials can hardly be expected to be experts on much at all, especially relating to governance. This is why citizen input and consideration of information and facts from the public and experts is so critical to public discourse and excellent decision making.

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