



## With a nod from voters, district to receive additional \$4 million

### District can cash in on state funding

By R.J. Marx  
Seaside Signal

Driven by the threat of tsunami and evidence of crumbling Seaside schools,

voters on Election Day rallied around the school district's \$99.7 million bond. The district can now add another \$4 million from the state's Department of Educa-

tion Office of Finance and Administration, which will bring total funding to more than \$103 million. The district was required to pass the bond to receive the state funds, which match up to \$4 million of a district's bond levy. "I couldn't be more proud

of our community for stepping forward and making a truly historic decision that will improve the lives of children and families for generations to come," Seaside Superintendent-emeritus

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Superintendent-emeritus Doug Dougherty and Gail Dundas, co-chairwoman of Vote Yes for Our Local Schools, celebrate the bond vote on election night.

## MAYOR STEPS DOWN IN EMOTIONAL FAREWELL



By R.J. Marx  
Seaside Signal

The city named its library after Mayor Don Larson at its council meeting on Monday, Nov. 14. Larson followed that announcement with a shocker. "I'm resigning after 14 years," he said at a City Council meeting. "We've had fun together. Staff, people that live in Seaside, all I can say is: Thank you very much. I love you all." Councilors choked back tears as they saluted the mayor, whose health concerns drove his decision to step down. Larson, 80, is battling cancer. "I can't say enough for all you've done," Councilor Randy Frank said. "He is the consummate person who understands civility," Councilor Jay Barber said. "If you think of what's happened in politics in our country, and even in our area. We've had the kind of leadership that really called for us to be civil with each other. We disagree, we have other points of view, but we've been civil — and you've led that."

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ABOVE: Randy Frank, Seth Morrissey, Dana Phillips, Don Larson, Don Johnson, Tita Montero and Jay Barber.

LEFT: Don Larson and Don Johnson, longtime friends and colleagues, after Larson's announcement of his retirement.

PHOTOS BY R.J. MARX  
SEASIDE SIGNAL

**'WE'VE HAD FUN TOGETHER. STAFF, PEOPLE THAT LIVE IN SEASIDE, ALL I CAN SAY IS: THANK YOU VERY MUCH. I LOVE YOU ALL.'**

Don Larson, outgoing Seaside mayor

## Room tax hike to pay for center upgrades

### \$14.6M plan at convention center

By R.J. Marx  
Seaside Signal

Visitors, not residents, will pay for upgrades to the Seaside Civic and Convention Center.

City councilors took the first step Monday, Nov. 14, to hike the lodging tax from 8 to 10 percent. The additional tourist revenue would be used to repay construction bonds over a 20- to 30-year period to fund the \$14.6 million renovation.

"We are at a time where we're waiting for the financing to go through," Civic and Convention Center General Manager Russ Vandenberg said after the meeting. "Tonight was a big step in that process."

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.

"Council had quite a bit of discussion about how they would go about this," City Manager Mark Winstanley said at the meeting. "The consensus was the best way for that type of revenue to be raised would be to raise the room tax from its current 8 percent up to whatever is going to be necessary to handle \$14 million worth of debt."

### Tax's history

Enacted in the early 1970s, Seaside's original hotel and motel tax was set at 5 percent. Over the years the rate was increased as additional services were needed to accommodate a growing number of visitors.

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

The rate, last changed in 2002, stands at 8 percent. The tax does not include vacation rental revenue. According to the new ordinance, funds collected are to be divided between tourism promotion, public safety, the Prom Improvement Fund and other city costs. More than half of the room tax — 56.8 percent — would be allocated to the convention center fund for outstanding debt requirements and for maintaining, upgrading and expansion of the convention center building.

An additional 4 percent of the tax would be allocated to the convention center capital improvement fund for maintenance, upgrading and expansion of the convention center building, properties and equipment.

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## Festival of Trees will be a 'winter wonderland'

### Meet Princess Belle and the Sugar Plum Fairy

By Katherine Lacaze  
For Seaside Signal

For Veronica Russell, Providence Seaside Hospital Foundation's development specialist, "Christmas is about kids."

Children bring magic to the holidays — their innocence, excitement and wonder awakening within adults the same feelings of joy and awe they experienced themselves in their youth, culminating in a rich, multi-generational spirit of celebration throughout the holiday season.

To generate an especially enchanting experience for children at this year's Festival of Trees community open

house, the Dec. 3 event will feature a new Candy Cane Lane, with expanded activities and offerings for young attendees.

An actress portraying Disney's Princess Belle will sing and read stories on the mezzanine at the Seaside Civic and Convention Center, where the event will take place. The Sugar Plum Fairy, inspired by "The Nutcracker" ballet, will oversee the making of Christmas magic wands. Children also will get to decorate cookies, get their picture taken with Santa Claus, have their faces painted, work on craft projects and create and wrap hand-made ornaments to give to loved ones.

During a conference Russell attended — targeted for designers and organizers of various Festival of Trees

events — she was inspired to bolster the experience for children and add a touch of Disney magic, as other organizations and communities had done.

"My vision for Candy Cane Lane is that people will come, families will come, to see the trees and see Santa and catch a good case of holiday spirit at the open house," Russell said.

### A winter wonderland

The 19th annual Providence Festival of Trees, hosted by the hospital's foundation, also will retain many traditions the community expects and enjoys. Guests will experience the highly anticipated display of stunning

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Members of last year's Providence Festival of Trees committee included (front row, from left) Kimberly Ward, executive director of the Seaside Providence Hospital Foundation; Anna Dennis; Laura Freedman; (second row, from left) Roxann Holwege; Veronica Russell, the foundation's development specialist; Raven Brown; and Alana Kujala.