

Mayor Larson: An ambassador amongst us

I first met Seaside Mayor Don Larson on May 17, 2010. The date is easy for me to remember because it was the same day I came to Seaside from Salt Lake City to interview for the position I’ve held since June of that same year. After participating in a panel interview earlier that morning, I was asked to return for a community gathering with other job finalists.

Interviewing with a panel of five can be tough enough, but now I was asked to come back and meet community and tourism leaders later that day? When I was told about this process, I’ll admit to some apprehension. I remember discussing it with family members and was told to look at it as an opportunity to interview them. It was sage advice. As an outsider at the time, it was a chance for me to see if this was a community of people that fit what I was looking for



SIDE RAIL
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too. Sure, I hoped Seaside would like me, but I also wanted to make sure Seaside made sense for me and my family.

Many conversations were had that day. Some took 30-60 seconds, as I shook hands with a relative stranger, exchanged names and we both moved on. Others turned into long conversations. My dialogue with Mayor Larson was one that lasted a few minutes and it had a profound effect on me. I didn’t fully understand Seaside at that point, but the fact that the mayor showed up to say hello and engage with me

and other candidates spoke volumes. The details of what was said isn’t as important as the presence of a man I didn’t know. He simply made me feel extremely welcome and unlike a guy that was 1,000 miles away from home and in a packed room with nobody I knew. The mayor stood tall that day, similar to how I remember nearly all of my interactions with him. He wore a smile on his face and told me how much he loved Seaside. There was genuine admiration for this community and I came to learn over time that his love runs as deep as anyone I know.

Seaside’s mayoral position is essentially a volunteer position, just like the six other councilors who make up Seaside City Council. And his fellow councilors will tell you that he took the job as serious as anything. One of my duties includes

sending out a monthly packet to a council-appointed Tourism Advisory Committee. The mayor was under no obligation to attend my monthly meeting, but he received my packet and I know he read every word. He’d call me from time to time and ask me to elaborate on something that he was unclear on or had concern about.

My favorite story involving my many interactions with the mayor was the time I was working with a tour group that was coming through Seaside. They would be touring several spots and wondered if the mayor would say a few words to them. We arranged to obtain about four dozen bags of taffy and then he and I met the tour group’s bus at the Seaside Cove. As the mayor hopped on board to welcome them and give them a brief overview, I handed out the taffy. Some months later, the

tour group leader provided me with a complete recap of their trip. In the recap, I was referred to as “the mayor’s aide.” It was a comment that made me smile, and still does as I reflect on the six plus years I’ve known Mayor Larson. He officially retired on November 14 to focus on his health and family, and I’ll greatly miss his presence. The mayor taught me a lot about the ultimate volunteerism and embodied the type of ambassadorship that makes Seaside such a special place to live and visit. I wish him nothing but the best. Have a thought or a question about tourism in Seaside, or maybe an idea for a future column? Drop me an email at jrahl@cityofseaside.us.

Jon Rahl is the director of tourism for the Seaside Visitors Bureau and assistant general manager of the Seaside Civic & Convention Center.

Brown named golf ‘Merchandiser of the Year’

By Gary Henley
EO Media Group

In his own words, “it will be a crazy week” for Matt Brown, golf professional at the Highlands Golf Club in Gearhart.

Because Brown, who was elected mayor of Gearhart on Tuesday, is spending his week in New York City, where he received the 2016 PGA National Merchandiser of the Year award for public golf courses.

“I’m totally looking forward to it, and I think it’s going to be a ton of fun,” Brown said over the weekend, just before leaving for the East Coast.

He is spending the entire week in New York, where he was for Election Day, and the awards ceremony Wednesday night.

The PGA of America announced the recipients of their 2016 National Awards in August. And for the third year in a row, Brown’s name was on the list of winners.

His latest national award comes on the heels of Brown receiving the 2014 and 2015 Pacific Northwest PGA Section Merchandiser of the Year Award for public facilities.

The Highlands Golf Club is a nine-hole public, executive-style golf course in Gearhart, where Brown has served as the golf pro since 2007.



Matt Brown speaks with Dave Marr III during the 2016 PGA of America National Awards for the 100th annual meeting held at the Grand Hyatt New York on Wednesday in New York City.

“We took over in 2007, and we take care of not only the pro shop, we take care of the greens crew and the course,” he said. “It’s been a lot of fun. We have

a great group of people who work there.”

Meanwhile, his time in New York will be spent with his girlfriend, Julie Visser, and his

sister Molly Brown, who works for CBS Sports and lives in New York City.

Wednesday’s awards ceremony took place at the Grand

Hyatt Hotel in Midtown Manhattan.

The Wednesday night awards are in conjunction with the PGA’s 100th annual meeting, which takes place at the Grand Hyatt, and features golf legend Jack Nicklaus.

“We’re going to get to meet a lot of the other PGA professionals,” Brown said before the event. “It’s a great opportunity for people in the industry to get together, talk about the state of the game and things we can do to improve the game.”

The Highlands course has a year-round, 1,500-square-foot golf shop. With a philosophy of keeping things simple, Brown and his staff manage the pro shop and an active online store, which has led to an overall 40 percent increase in sales since 2008.

Brown has served previously at the Astoria Golf & Country Club, Bandon Dunes Golf Resort and Pumpkin Ridge Golf Club.

“I’d like to thank all of our customers at the Highlands who come and play every day, and shop at the shop,” he said. “Special thanks to our staff, especially Todd Payne and Adam Wood, who are both in the pro shop full time. They’ve done some great work this year.”

Seaside native, Marine veteran now serves students

By Edward Stratton
EO Media Group

ASTORIA — After 18 years in the U.S. Marine Corps, Billy Eddy got the chance to continue his family’s tradition of public service on the North Coast.

Eddy was hired over the summer as the Astoria School District’s new director of transportation, maintenance and safety. He replaced Ryan Hahn, who left to become transportation director of the Gresham-Barlow School District.

Eddy retired from the Marine Corps at the end of August, the same day as the district’s new food service director, Michael Kelly, retired from the U.S. Coast Guard. As an artilleryman, Eddy shot and trans-



Billy Eddy is the Astoria School District’s new director of transportation, maintenance and safety.

ported howitzers on tours in the Helmand province of Afghanistan and Anbar in Iraq.

“Everything we did in the Marine Corps ... encompassed what I do here,” Eddy said of

his new job.

The Marines provided Eddy with some experience in transportation, albeit with more fireworks. He’s overseen the movement of troops

between bases in California and Afghanistan, hundreds of vehicles between islands in the southern Pacific Ocean and Australia and convoys through war zones.

Managing school transportation involves fewer external pressures, such as getting shot at, he said, “but it has its own complications. It’s making sure kids are safe.”

The district transports more than 560 students to and from school on any given day, roughly one-third of enrollment. Eddy oversees more than 25 bus drivers, mechanics and groundskeepers.

With so many areas to cover, Eddy said he has to trust his employees to make informed decisions. “It’s really allowing people to make decisions on their own, and just keeping

me informed. I give them guidance.”

Eddy is one of many veterans employed by the school district.

“I think it’s great for the community,” he said. “They’re still able to give back to the community and have that civil service mentality. Big picture, we can’t do enough for our veterans.”

Eddy, a Seaside native, said his family has a history of local public service. His father, Bill Eddy, is chief of the Gearhart Volunteer Fire Department, and his grandfather — also Bill Eddy — was the city’s chief of police. His wife, Astoria native Melissa Eddy, is an instructional assistant in special education at Astoria Middle School. His son, Will, is a freshman at Astoria High School.

Last expansion was in 1991

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The tax increase could be approved by January, but the hikes would not go into effect at least until July, Winstanley said.

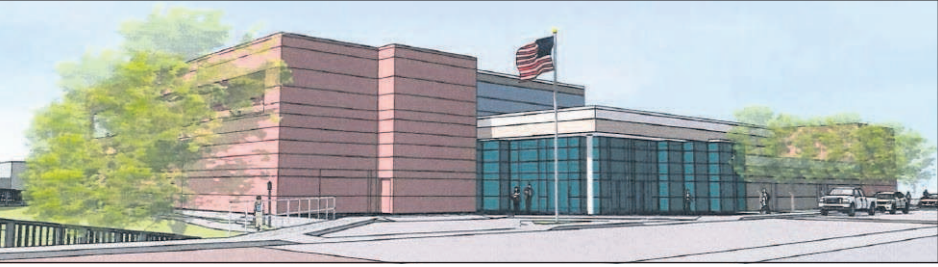
“I’m very excited about the process,” Vandenberg said. “It’s

been a long journey, but we’re certainly looking forward to the completion of the project, which we’ve been working on for the last seven or eight years.”

If the city OKs the tax hike in second and third readings,

the convention center will go forward with the bonds.

“Then we’re going to hire a design architectural firm and then a construction firm,” Vandenberg said. “We’ll be starting that process as soon as the bonds are sold.”



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

Federal funds are unavailable to offset local school relocation costs

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Doug Dougherty wrote supporters in a post-election email. “Seaside School District will also receive \$4 million of additional capital funding from the state of Oregon.”

The state funds come after the school district was unable to access funding through the Seismic Rehabilitation Grant Program to use to retrofit or relocate its schools because three of

the district’s schools are sited within the tsunami inundation zone, Dougherty said this summer.

The Legislature last year authorized \$125 million in state matching bonds to provide incentives to school districts seeking approval for capital projects. Estacada School District, Vernonia School District, and Gresham-Barlow School District — three of the school districts ahead of Seaside — did not pass their bonds,

Dougherty said Wednesday.

Seaside was first on a waiting list to receive the matching funds, which were contingent on the district passing a bond in November.

As a result of this week’s bond vote, Gearhart Elementary School, Seaside High School and Broadway Middle School will relocate to a new campus location in the East Hills adjacent to Seaside Heights Elementary School.

Federal funds are unavailable to offset local school relocation costs because of a ban on federal earmarks, Dougherty said.

Dougherty said Wednesday the district’s first step will be to work toward expanding the city’s urban growth boundary for development of the campus. The state requires cities to maintain a line around their perimeters to moderate urban sprawl. If more land is needed, such as for the

new school campus, land is zoned and annexed into the city.

Earlier this year, the city’s Planning Commission tabled discussions on a plan to increase the urban growth boundary for future residential housing. Seaside School District was purposely excluded from this plan so they could pursue an urban growth boundary expansion specifically to relocate its schools out of the tsunami inundation zone.