

County, city leaders look to the new year

By Lyra Fontaine and R.J. Marx
Seaside Signal

For 2017, we asked local mayors Jay Barber of Seaside, Matt Brown of Gearhart, Sam Steidel of Cannon Beach and Clatsop County Manager Cameron Moore what the biggest challenge facing their areas will be in the coming year.

Jay Barber

"We have a City Council that works well together and gets things done. One of the significant challenges will be swearing in two new councilors in the new year, one newly elected and one that the council will appoint to fill the now vacant councilor seat from Ward 1 and getting them on board and working well with the other four councilors and the mayor.

"With the approval of the bond issue for the Seaside School District, it will be incumbent upon the Planning Commission and the council to address the expansion of the urban growth boundary in the new year to bring the new campus into the city and work to provide proper access to the new location.

"Affordable housing in Clatsop County is a major issue that all cities and the county will need to work together to provide workable solutions.

"This is an issue that will require input from the county, cities, local businesses, developers and concerned citizens. We can learn from other cities and regions where workable solutions are being implemented. This issue is rising to the top of my concerns.

"Tsunami preparedness continues to be a major is-



SEASIDE SIGNAL/FILE PHOTO

Seaside Mayor Jay Barber lists the new school campus at the top of his list of 2017 priorities.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Cannon Beach Mayor Sam Steidel hopes to have a goal-setting session early in the year.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Gearhart Mayor Matt Brown is hoping for openness and cooperation in the coming year.



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Clatsop County Manager Cameron Moore says a new county compensation plan and the Linn County timber lawsuit are top of the challenge list.

ing our compensation system for county employees, so we're anticipating that 2017 will be the year that we implement that new structure, which again, doesn't affect the taxpayers or anything," he said. "But anytime you make significant changes to your compensation structure, there's a few challenges that go along with that.

Externally, there are two challenges on the horizon. "One is, in 2017, we will be doing a review of the county charter, which is the county government. It opens up county government to potentially discuss either small or significant changes to the structure of county government," Moore said. "We don't know where that's going to go yet, but obviously that's very important. It's something we only do once every 10 years. I would say that, probably, you know, certainly is very important. How challenging it will be, we don't know yet."

Secondly, the commissioners need to make a decision on the Linn County timber lawsuit. "But regardless of which decision they make, we are anticipating that 2017 — maybe all year, I don't know — but this will be the discovery part of that trial," Moore said. "What that means for us is, is whether we're in the lawsuit or whether we're out of the lawsuit, we're probably going to have to commit significant county staff time and significant resources to responding to requests for years of data about timber sales and timber revenues. And we don't know how much demand that will place on county resources, but it could be significant."

sue of significant importance. The highest priority is to seek funding for the retrofitting of all of our bridges to assist citizens to be able to move to safe ground in the case of a major incident.

"In addition we need to continue our thinking about resilience. How will we continue to be a city in the case of a major earthquake and tsunami?"

"Finally, annexation to the south of the city to address blight, vacant and sub-standard housing as well as the need to address access to city water and sewerage."

Matt Brown

"As you know Gearhart has gone through a handful of contentious issues the last few years, so I hope 2017 brings a sense of calmness and cooperation, working together with our citizens and other cities in Clatsop County to solve common problems, such as affordable housing.

I'm looking forward to having work sessions with our fellow councilors in the months to come to work on strategic

'Affordable housing in Clatsop County is a major issue that all cities and the county will need to work together to provide workable solutions.'

Seaside Mayor Jay Barber

planning for the next four years and prioritizing what is important to our residents. I hope this includes working on a new fire station plan, emergency preparedness and a transportation master plan.

"Also, looking forward to working with city staff to find better ways to communicate with our citizens including building a new city of Gearhart interactive website, scheduling town hall meetings and getting folks more involved in the process and decision making.

"It's great to work with our amazing city staff and department heads and I look forward to a very positive and constructive 2017 for Gearhart!"

Sam Steidel

Mayor Sam Steidel, Cannon Beach said the biggest

challenge the city will face in 2017 is looking at how various projects might affect one another.

"My concern is that as a council we have a comprehensive view of all the problems so they can interact as they need to be. I have a feeling we do not have a lot of big problems, but lots of projects that intertwine a little.

The council will have a goal-setting session early this year to reach a consensus on city priorities, using the city's strategic plan as a guide.

Steidel said his personal areas of focus include seeing how the former Cannon Beach Elementary property could be used and expanding NeCus Park.

Steidel's longer-term goal is for the council to work on

No video lottery at former Gearhart grocery

Owner says he can't make it without video gambling machines

By R.J. Marx
Seaside Signal

Citing losses, Terry Lowenberg closed the Gearhart Grocery in December after winning city approvals for a brew pub and deli.

Thursday, Jan. 12, he went before the Planning Commission seeking a permit to install video lottery machines in the brew pub, a move, he said, essential for the pub's future profitability.

Lowenberg said the machines — four to start, with a maximum of six — placed in an enclosed area next to the deli separated by an 8-foot wall, would help the brew pub survive economic hardship in winter months.

"We need them simply to make it exist," Lowenberg said. "If we can't get through this, we will end up having to close the store."

The Planning Commission, unconvinced, voted 5-2 to deny the permit request.

Resident Dave Eilenberg

spoke on behalf of the proposal. "I don't personally gamble, but I think a lot of people rely on them to keep employees and jobs in the community," he said.

Gearhart's Wilson Mark suggested Lowenberg didn't need video lottery machines but rather a successful business plan. "The reality is the last two (grocery) owners struggled as well," Mark said. "But I believe you're struggling a lot more than they were. We don't want video poker, and we don't need it. If you can't make it without video poker, maybe we don't need you. We want a full-fledged grocery store."

Commissioner Terry Graff said he had not voted for the brew pub in May. "It was obvious you didn't have a business plan," Graff said. "Now what you're doing is coming up with gambling to make this fly. To prop up your whole business, and I can't support that. It's not a bar. It's not a tavern. It's not a place you can gamble."



Terry Lowenberg



R.J. MARX/SEASIDE SIGNAL

The owner of the former Gearhart Grocery was denied in his bid to install four lottery machines in a new brew pub.

Commissioner Russ Taggard suggested that video lottery could open the door for gambling machines in other downtown locations, turning Gearhart into a "little Atlantic City."

"I don't believe it's anybody's business to tell me I should sell or anything else," Lowenberg said in rebuttal. "I cannot afford to keep money pumping into this. If we can't keep it alive we have to close it."

Commissioners Virginia Dideum and Jeremy Davis supported the video lottery proposal.

"You're trying to make a business in a small seasonal

community," Davis said. "I feel there's a need there, and still consistent with the use we've already approved."

Dideum praised the brew pub's design and said potential profits from video lottery could help the restaurant survive.

Acting on a recommendation from City Planner Carole Connell, commissioners Graff, Taggard, Carl Anderson, David Smith and Richard Owsley voted to deny the application. Dideum and Davis opposed the denial.

Lowenberg could appeal the decision to the City Council. Approval for the brew pub remains unchanged.

New mayor, council president in Gearhart

Jesse is Gearhart's second in command

By R.J. Marx
Seaside Signal

With a change at the top of city government came a call for a second in command, council president. Mayor Matt Brown ushered in the new year at Gearhart's first council meeting of 2017 and among his agenda items was the job of appointing a council president.

Dan Jesse was unanimously elected to serve the role.

The position, mandated in the city's charter, calls for council members to elect a president among themselves. In the mayor's absence from a council meeting, the council president would preside. Whenever the mayor is unable to perform the functions of office, the president acts as mayor.

Sue Lorain held the post under the term of Dianne Widdop.

In nominating Paulina Cockrum, Kerry Smith

called for a "well-rounded council."

"Instead of re-electing a person, I'd like to see somebody else has the chance," Smith said. "It makes sense another council member to get the experience."

Lorain nominated Jesse, who is serving his second four-year term after running unopposed in November.

Cockrum, the junior member on the council, withdrew her name from consideration and joined Brown, Lorain and Smith in voting for Jesse.

Jesse's career in public service began with the Seaside Civic and Convention Center and the Seaside Improvement Commission, before he and his wife, Julie, moved to Gearhart, where he served on the Planning Commission before election to the City Council.

"Being the council president in Gearhart is largely symbolic, but if the mayor were to be absent, at that point I would be next in line," Jesse said after the meeting.

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Council seeks to fill vacancy

Council from Page 1A

applied and was nominated for this vacancy.

Two candidates are also seeking one available seat on the city's library board.

Montero stressed the need to invite new faces to fill vacancies. "We really can't run and not just the city but all the organizations in town and I happen to be on several without volunteers," she said. "Whatever we can do to encourage the youth of the community, we need their energy, their ideas. This is their future."

"Volunteers are what makes this community such a special community, people wanting to get involved and make the community better," Councilor Dana Phillips said. "You can travel all over the United States and a lot of people don't have the support we do."



R.J. MARX/SEASIDE SIGNAL

City Manager Mark Winstanley swears in Tom Horning, Sean Morrissey and Randy Frank.