

FIREFIGHTERS NEED YOUR VOTE IN SEASIDE

Chances are a Seaside firefighter won't be able to read this piece all the way through in one sitting. It's likely they'll be interrupted for a call for service.

The city saw 1,329 calls in 2016, an increase of 73 percent since 2008. Fifty-seven of those were fire calls. A two-alarm apartment fire on South Edgewood in July displaced at least 13 people and caused more than \$110,000 loss. A July 18 blaze on Avenue F started in a vacant garage and rapidly spread to a neighboring home; total loss was close to \$90,000.

Seaside Fire and Rescue, a participant in the county's mutual aid agreement, provided aid to outside agencies for 14 incidents, including search and rescue, wild land and structural fire responses. The department conducted 233 fire and life-safety inspections for schools, churches and businesses. Search and rescue teams used technology and climbing skills to rescue injured or lost hikers on Saddle Mountain and Tillamook Head Trail. One of those rescues took more than nine hours. Seaside's lifeguards responded to 4,778 incidents last year, among them, water rescues, assists and medical aid.

We non-firefighters, who have the leisure to read this column without interruption, have the obligation to provide our first responders with the equipment and personnel necessary to save lives. Local Option 4-186 goes before voters Tuesday, May 16, and in it come added firefighting enhancements for property owners, safety measures for firefighters and insurance cost savings for the city and taxpayers.

The Seaside Fire Department is asking voters to approve continuation of a levy to replace the 2013 fire levy, which expires at the end of June 2018. The ballot measure asks for \$2.018 million over five years for fire equipment and personnel, to be split three ways: for self-contained breathing apparatus; a new ladder truck; and funding for the department's training and safety officer.

Ladder truck

The new 100-foot ladder truck, at \$1.2 million, makes up the largest part of the levy. Seaside Fire and Rescue's 20-year-old 75-foot ladder fails to reach some of the larger hotels in town, including WorldMark and the condos at Sand and Sea.

"We can't reach the top," Fire Chief Joey Daniels said. "We can reach the bottom of the top floor balcony, but that's almost with the ladder straight up and down. That's where it becomes challenging. You never run a ladder straight up and down — you want some angle to it so people can actually walk up it."

The new truck will make climbing safer and enable firefighters to reach higher floors, Capt. Gordon Houston said. Steep or hard-to-access homes will become more accessible and provide an option to fight fires from overhead.

The ladder truck takes about 18 months to build, Daniels said, so the current truck will still be rolling for two or three years.

If the levy is successful, the fire department will choose a ladder truck from one of six different vendors, Houston said. Ladder trucks go for about \$1.2 million, almost three times the cost for an engine.

After delivery, the 75-foot ladder truck would be sold because of ongoing maintenance and storage costs, Daniels said.

Training officer

The training and safety position — filled by Div. Chief Dave Rankin — is probably the "biggest position on the department," Daniels said in early May.

The city will need an affirmative vote on the levy to supply his personnel costs of \$500,000 over five years, according to Daniels.

Among Rankin's tasks are "the day to day operations," Daniels said, including safety, EMS and lifeguard training.

Rankin is one of two division chiefs, along with Chris Dugan, the fire marshal, responsible for fire prevention and public education.

Rankin is considered invaluable to the department, handling recruits, interns, training and training records, Daniels said.

"The reason our insurance rating is so low is because of Dave and his training," firefighter Katie Bulletset said in a late-April presentation. "He has probably made us one of the strongest fire departments on the North Coast."



R.J. MARX/SEASIDE SIGNAL

Division Chief Dave Rankin at the Seaside firehouse.



R.J. MARX/SEASIDE SIGNAL

Firefighter Katie Bulletset demonstrates safety equipment in need of replacement.



R.J. MARX/SEASIDE SIGNAL

Captain Gordon Houston of Seaside Fire and Rescue.

Safety apparatus

The levy's third component are the masks, filters and cylinders that could make the difference between life and death.

"We can't go into a fire without them," Houston, a downtown truck company firefighter for Portland Fire Department, said.

The equipment is worn by rescue workers and firefighters to provide breathable air in hazardous interior environments. With a shelf life of 15 years, Seaside Fire and Rescue's apparatus is "rapidly coming to the end of their shelf life," Houston said.

If the levy is successful, the department would receive 24 air-packs and 32 masks.

Air-packs have an adjustable harness, making them more manageable for smaller firefighters, Bulletset said.

Firefighters said the levy would help keep the department's insurance rating low. Ratings are based on water supply, the dispatch center, personnel and training, among other factors.

"As a volunteer agency, we have what you can get as the lowest insurance rating for volunteer organizations," Houston said. "There are a lot of paid organizations that have full staff departments that have to pay more insurance than we do."

Training of firefighters, officers and the condition of the department's apparatus are what keep insurance rates low, he said.

"We have such a good fire department, we're just one notch below the city of Portland, a huge city with a paid full-time staff," Houston said.

Seaside, a small city that becomes a much bigger one in the summer, needs the protection of its firefighters. This measure will result in a rate of \$0.34 cents per thousand of assessed value in the first year.

Imagine if only one life could be saved at such a cost. Vote yes this week.

Feeling like a kid again

One of the very first things that helped me fall in love with Seaside were the swings on the beach. I know swings seem a very ordinary thing, but when I see them, I get excited. As a somewhat solitary and independent child growing up in a beach town on the mid-Atlantic coast, the one made famous by the Monopoly game, I put in a lot of time on swings. You could say swings were an essential element in my developing nature.

Unlike Seaside, there weren't any swings available to the public on my childhood

beach. The swings I frequented, often daily, were situated on the playground area of a small residential hospital called the Children's Seashore House. The Children's Seashore House was founded in 1872 as a first-of-its-kind seaside hospital, funded by endowments and trusts from wealthy families from Philadelphia who saw the benefits of sea air for their own ailing children. One of these early patrons read a book written by a French physician who advocated "marine medication" as a cure for childhood illness. The irony of the experience of the swings at the Children's Seashore House was that the children who lived inside the house were far too sick to swing, or even go outdoors themselves. My friends and I sometimes glimpsed them when their caregivers wheeled their hospital beds and wheelchairs up on to the boardwalk. Most of them were recumbent, seemingly incapable of much movement. It was the 1960s and these were children suffering from cancer, leukemia, muscular dystrophy, polio. The one time I got up the nerve to ask my mother about these children, her face clouded over. "Most of them will never leave that place" she said, grimly.

Meanwhile, my best friend Claudia and I made good use of those swings. The Seashore House was built right up on to the boardwalk. The front yard, as it was, was sand. For some reason we were never worried that the staff of the Seashore House would chase us away. Even though we were quite young, we sensed our presence was viewed with favor. The Seashore House staff and residents could plainly see us using the swings through the huge plate glass windows that fronted the physical building. Our joy was evident. As soon as I jumped on my swing, I kicked off the red Keds slip-ons I wore whenever I wasn't in school, giving my bare feet the freedom to flex and point, helping me soar higher and higher. Claudia was a daredevil, always attempting to loop the loop or whatever it was called when you flew your swing (with you on it) over the top bar. When we were good and lightheaded from our flying adventures, we'd leap off our swings midair, falling to the sand, laughing wildly.

In Venice Beach, California, where we lived for a time in the late '80s, there were public beach swings, but there were also rats and scary-looking beach vagrants. I had a small child by then and as much as I wished to take him to play on the beach, it wasn't really safe in Venice. It wasn't uncommon to find used syringes littering any play area. This was very disappointing to me as I longed to swing again and expose my young child to the pleasure.

This morning, on one of the rare days we had sun, I walked little Lucy the min-pin down to the beach to survey the swings a half mile south of Broadway and The Prom. I had a 12-ounce latte from the excellent Pacific Pearl Bistro on Broadway in hand. The shop, which has been open about a year, features Sleepy Monk coffee from Cannon Beach, which is spectacular. For a few minutes we were completely alone. The dull roar of the ocean and the calling of gulls were the only sounds. I thought about tying the dog up to a railing and jumping on a swing, but then two groups of adults approached and I chickened out, feeling embarrassed to be a middle aged woman playing on the swings. Walking home, I promised myself I'd do it soon. It's a goal to fly like that again.

VIEW FROM THE PORCH
EVE MARX



LETTERS

Voice support for Mindy Stokes

I am excited to support Mindy Stokes for the Clatsop Care Health District Board, Position 1, in the special election May 16. She is uniquely qualified to serve in this public office.

For four years she served as their social services director and then as their care memory community administrator. She is well known for her community activism and effective outreach, building new collaborative partnerships.

She has strong convictions with leadership skills that support social justice values and positive quality of life issues that benefit all community members.

She has proven experience in advocating for the elderly, and those who are most vulnerable.

Clatsop Care Health District and our entire community will be well served with Mindy in Position 1. She is ready, willing and able to serve in this most important position. Please cast your vote for this uniquely qualified, proven community leader.

Mary Blake Seaside

I ask you to vote for Rohne, Spence, Campbell

Because of the importance of the Port of Astoria's impact on all of Clatsop

County, I ask folks here to join me in supporting Dirk Rohne, Frank Spence and Jim Campbell in the coming election. There is so much potential, the creation of an asset that few cities can cite. We are so fortunate to have this here.

Sandy Rea Seaside

Rushing dune decision

On April 13, the Gearhart Planning Commission ignored pleas from several Gearhart citizens to postpone passing an ordinance allowing the clearing of vegetation on two 60-foot swaths of the

See Letters, Page 5A

MEETINGS

Monday, May 15

Seaside Budget Committee, 4 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Tuesday, May 16

Sunset Empire Parks and Rec District, 4 p.m., 1225 Ave. A, Seaside.

Seaside School District, 6 p.m., 1810 S. Franklin, Seaside.

Seaside Planning Commission, 7 p.m., work session, City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Wednesday, May 17

Seaside Tourism Advisory Committee, 3 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Thursday, May 18

Seaside Tree Board, 4 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Gearhart Planning Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 698 Pacific Way.

Seaside Transportation Advisory Commission, 6 p.m., 989 Broadway.

Monday, May 22

Seaside City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Tuesday, May 23

Seaside Airport Advisory Committee, 6 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Thursday, June 1

Seaside Parks Advisory Committee, 7 p.m., City Hall, City Hall, 989 Broadway.



PUBLISHER
David F. Pero

EDITOR
R.J. Marx

ADVERTISING MANAGER
Betty Smith

CIRCULATION MANAGER
Jeremy Feldman

ADVERTISING SALES
Brandy Stewart

PRODUCTION MANAGER
John D. Bruijn

SYSTEMS MANAGER
Carl Earl

STAFF WRITER
Brenna Visser

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Rebecca Herren
Katherine Lacaze
Eve Marx
Esther Moberg
Jon Rahl

Seaside Signal

The Seaside Signal is published every other week by EO Media Group, 1555 N. Roosevelt, Seaside, OR 97138. 503-738-5561 seasidesignal.com Copyright 2017 © Seaside Signal. Nothing can be reprinted or copied without consent of the owners.

Letter policy

The Seaside Signal welcomes letters to the editor. The deadline is noon Monday prior to publication. Letters must be 400 words or less and must be signed by the author and include a phone number for verification. We also request that submissions be limited to one letter per month. Send to 1555 N. Roosevelt Drive, Seaside, OR 97138, drop them off at 1555 N. Roosevelt Drive or fax to 503-738-9285, or email rmarx@seasidesignal.com

Subscriptions

Annually: \$40.50 in county • \$58.00 in and out of county • e-Edition: only \$30.00

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Seaside Signal, P.O. Box 210, Astoria, OR 97103. Postage Paid at Seaside, OR, 97138 and at additional mailing offices. Copyright 2017 © by the Seaside Signal. No portion of this newspaper may be reproduced without written permission. All rights reserved.