

Student leaves his mark on Seaside parks plan

Focus on green space, accessibility

By R.J. Marx
Seaside Signal

Christian Montbriand will be leaving Seaside at the end of July, but not before he leaves his mark on the city and its future.

Montbriand led a parks master plan open house at the Seaside Library Wednesday night, sharing a vision for the city's parks in years to come.

Praise, criticism, goals and opportunities were also shared by about 40 residents gathered to find ways to improve the city's recreation area at the parks system update.

Montbriand has spent a year of service here as part of the RARE (Resource Assistance for Rural Environments) AmeriCorps program, helping to develop tsunami education outreach and the parks master plan in Seaside.

The plan gives the city a look at where the city's parks will be in the next 20 years.

Plusses and minuses

At Wednesday's open house, residents highlighted park benefits of proximity to ocean and nature, accessibility and wide range of use.

Park negatives included dumping, lack of bike racks and limited athletic fields.

Residents said they hoped to retain city green space in



R.J. MARX/SEASIDE SIGNAL

Visitors critique the city's parks.

the face of ongoing development.

An Illinois native, Montbriand said he hoped his ef-

forts would "activate and energize" the parks advisory committee.

"Unfortunately, I will not

be able to see the updates all through," he said. "I'm trying to get them on the best foot forward so they can go through and finish up this project."

He said he hoped to identify the data from the parks inventory to synthesize into the capital improvements program.

Taking comments

Montbriand's work has been overseen by Public Works Director Dale McDowell.

McDowell said he plans to summarize the findings at Monday's City Council meeting.

"From there it goes back to the parks advisory board," McDowell said. "With all of the recommendations, it will

come back eventually to me at Public Works and will go through everything, what's feasible and what's not. This will all be plugged into an updated master plan."

"What can't get done and what will be done, I'll find out after we have the discussion," McDowell said.

Montbriand urged residents to let their thoughts be known, either at upcoming meetings or online.

"The online survey is still open, so we encourage people to provide input," he said. "Last night I checked, there were 83 responses, which is more than I expected."

This fall, Montbriand heads to the University of Oregon for his graduate degree.

He is studying planning with a transportation focus.

School district plan raises concerns about traffic

Schools from Page 1A

"This is one of the key pieces in moving the schools up onto the new property," former superintendent and member of the district's construction oversight committee Doug Dougherty said after the meeting. "This is a major step."

Planning goals

Although a conceptual plan for the site was included in the district's submission, this was not a request to approve a development plan for the site, according to a city staff report.

The request, headed to the City Council, would make amendments to the comprehensive plan, zoning ordinance and zoning map necessary for the school district to prepare a conditional use request for an institutional development plan for the campus.

Consultant Greg Winterowd of Winterbrook Planning said the school's request addresses relevant criteria of statewide planning goals, the Seaside comprehensive plan and the Clatsop County comprehensive plan.

The proposed location is the only site that meets all seven city criteria, he said, and the only site with access to a major collector street, South Wahanna Road.

"Once we get approval, we know we have the proper zon-

ing, the intent is to finish the development plan, show them what this development plan is and then really focus on impacts," Winterowd said.

Supporters

Educators, school board members, government officials, former students and others stressed the urgency of the commission's decision, the result of what Dougherty said was a result of more than 25 years of research into the Cascadia Subduction Zone.

Dougherty said studies could not tell exactly when a Cascadia event would occur, but it's "highly likely to occur by 2060. It's very important this get done as quickly as possible."

Patrick Wingard of the Department of Land Conservation and Development and Oregon Coastal Management Program evaluated the proposal in terms of statewide planning goals, particularly those relating to tsunami inundation zones and urban and rural uses.

"We support the proposal because they've shown the proper rationale and justification to show the locational and need requirements laid out in statewide planning goals," Wingard said.

Seaside High School Principal Jeff Roberts called the school the "hub of the community," and encouraged commissioners to "do what

is best for kids" by approving the application.

Recent Seaside grad Brad Rzewnicki said he saw no other option than moving the schools to the new campus. "I think this new school will promote even greater learning for the staff as well as other students," he said.

Gearhart's Mayor Matt Brown, speaking as a district resident, said he was supportive of the zone change.

Brown called the move an "investment" into the communities of Gearhart, Seaside and Cannon Beach fitting into the criteria outlined for the urban growth boundary amendment.

Chairman of the school district's board of directors Steve Phillips said the campus would provide an emergency, higher elevation refuge if a tsunami or natural disaster should hit.

"There are a lot of positives to this and I encourage you to move forward and allow us to continue our planning," Phillips said.

Concerns

Issues raised during public testimony included concerns about traffic on Spruce Drive, Wahanna and Cooper Road, a side street occasionally used as a cut-through.

Wingard asked for assurances that future development of existing school properties — Gearhart Elementary

School, Seaside High School and Broadway Middle School — would not be rezoned for higher density uses.

Coordinator of the Necanicum Watershed Council Mellyssa Graeper asked that any new road consider waterways and wetlands.

District bus driver Allan Erickson drew attention to potential traffic bottlenecks of Avenue S and Wahanna Road, as well vulnerability of the city's bus barn and maintenance facility in the case of a catastrophic event.

Commissioners told district officials they would like to see traffic measures — including stop signs, lower speed limits and limits on left-hand turns in some locations — discussed in future applications.

Unanimous vote

Commissioners considered holding the hearing open for another month, but ultimately decided to take an immediate vote.

"I don't see any testimony coming that would change my mind as to how I'm going to vote here," Commissioner Richard Ridout said in asking for a vote.

"The concerns are valid, but that will be taken care of at a later date," Commissioner Lou Neubecker said.

Commissioners unanimously agreed in recommending approval to the council.

Renewal includes \$26 million for bridges

Urban from Page 1A

"You're not going to have development in place in the early years because you're not generating any money yet," Winstanley said. "So, it takes a while to get this going. The major projects are always going to be on the tail end of an urban-renewal district, not in the beginning."

Numbers are forecast assuming 5 percent growth, Winstanley said. According to the report, the estimated total amount of tax increment revenues to service the \$68.5 million maximum indebtedness is \$78.5 million, made up of tax-increment revenues from permanent rate levies.

The urban-renewal area could be in existence for 25 years or until it reaches its maximum indebtedness, whichever comes first. "If you hit either one of those, you're done," Winstanley said.

Bridge upgrades

Projects to be completed using urban-renewal funds fall into four categories: school infrastructure, general infrastructure, business assistance and administration.

The school could see up to \$9 million in funds, designated for U.S. Highway 101 turn signals, road access to the new campus and sewer system needs, among other improvements.

Business assistance funds of \$300,000 could be used for storefront redesign, property acquisition, signage or workforce housing. Administration of the district is expected to exceed \$1.1 million.



COLIN MURPHEY/EO MEDIA GROUP

Projects in the Southeast Seaside Urban Renewal Plan include work to repair bridges such as the one on Avenue U.

Improvements in south Seaside make up the largest piece of the funding pie, with, by far, the largest portion of the estimated \$45 million considered for bridge improvements. The report identifies a need for new bridges at avenues A, G, S and U, each with a center turn lane, multipurpose path and Americans with Disabilities Act-accessible sidewalks.

"The amount of \$26 million equates to about \$5 million per bridge," Tom Horning, a geologist and first-term city councilor who ran on a platform of tsunami preparedness. "This is a reasonable number under present conditions, but assumes subdued inflation."

According to Horning, the four bridges are essential tsunami-evacuation infrastructure. "They need to remain standing and be accessible by the public when the coming magnitude 9 earthquake strikes, because the earthquake will generate a tsunami that floods over Seaside within 20 to 30 minutes," Horning said. "The present bridges will not survive the shaking and will

become impassable because of collapse, trapping residents and visitors alike. By replacing the bridges, we will save several thousand lives, if the quake happens during the summer."

The most important bridge to replace first is Avenue G, based on the number of people who are presently critically endangered and the time it takes to evacuate, he said.

A pedestrian footbridge could be even more important, Horning said. "In terms of saving the greatest number of lives, a pedestrian bridge that crosses near the south end of Holladay Drive would be the best use of limited funds."

A footbridge crossing the Necanicum in the vicinity of Avenues N to S, budgeted at about \$5 million, could provide timely evacuation that none of the other bridges can, he added. "Given the community parks plan and our experience with other bridges we have replaced, having

extrawide sidewalks and bike lanes is desirable, as well as a center turn lane for smooth traffic flow onto Holladay and to carry evacuation traffic in the event of tsunami."

Approvals needed

Because part of the land in the southeast Seaside urban renewal area is owned by the county, those areas would need to be annexed into the city. Annexation of county land requires approval from the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners, which will consider the issue Wednesday.

At Seaside's Aug. 14 council meeting, councilors will consider whether the urban-renewal district is in compliance with city goals. "City councilors will be looking at it from the standpoint of the merits of the district and whether they believe the goals and the impacts of the district are acceptable to the city of Seaside," Winstanley said.

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