

Housing, homelessness drive Gearhart concerns

City to enter into county agreement

By R.J. Marx
Seaside Signal

In Gearhart, a city where the median home price reaches \$424,000, housing issues take center stage.

Before the Wednesday, Sept. 6, City Council meeting was over, the council had taken in a request for funding from Helping Hands Re-entry and resolved to enter into an agreement with the county and other cities on a \$100,000 housing study.

In June, County Manager Cameron Moore suggested Gearhart partner with other cities to learn more about housing issues. A similar six-month study by Tillamook County identified specific data about the area's housing market and possible solutions.

The Clatsop County agreement recognizes the "lack of housing options is creating barriers to continued economic growth."

Businesses are struggling to retain and attract employees because they cannot find housing or cannot afford the housing that might be available, according to the agreement.

Cannon Beach, Seaside, Warrenton,



Alan Evans, CEO and founder of Helping Hands Re-entry, addresses the Gearhart City Council.

Astoria and Gearhart have been asked to provide \$10,000 toward the estimated \$100,000 cost of the project. The county will pledge \$50,000.

According to the agreement, the county will hire a consultant to assist in understanding the type, size, location and price of housing needed to meet the current and future needs of county residents, along with market forces, regulations and local barriers that impact housing development.

"This is a good opportunity for partnership with the county and cities of Clatsop County," City Administrator Chad Sweet wrote in a staff report.

City Attorney Peter Watts said there is a general consensus of a housing emergency in the county, and growing pressure for cities to conduct these types of studies.

Cost savings will come from teaming with the county, rather than preparing an independent study, he added.

Funding for the housing study partnership will come from the city's planning fund, Sweet said. The fund contains \$14,950.

Mayor Matt Brown and City Councilors Paulina Cockrum, Dan Jesse and Sue Lorain voted to support the partnership. Councilor Kerry Smith was absent.

Request for shelter funds

In a public comment period before the regular meeting, Alan Evans, chief executive officer and founder of Helping Hands, requested support for his organization. Helping Hands provides shelter and re-entry services through 11 facilities with 190 beds a night in four counties. In Seaside, Helping Hands provides up to 60 beds a night.

"All the cities provide assistance and we've always wondered how come Gearhart hasn't offered us an opportunity to apply," Evans said. "I had a conversation with somebody who said, 'Have you asked?' The answer is 'No, I haven't.'"

Evans cited an increase in need and a housing crisis "like we've never seen before in the last year."

"We've had a increase of 6 percent in the last year in children needing services. In our community," he said. "We had an 18 percent increase in the elderly needing assistance in this community. And a 35 percent increase in people needing services in the last two years."

Evans delivered a letter and annual report to councilors, who agreed to consider the request at a future budget session.

Concerns include watershed, project cost

Campus from Page 1A

According to a report delivered by the district consultant, Winterbrook Planning, the reason for the amendment and related comprehensive plan and zoning ordinance changes is to provide for the safety of district students and staff by moving its three remaining outdated schools — Seaside High School, Broadway Middle School and Gearhart Elementary School — out of the tsunami inundation zone to relatively flat and stable ground.

"The decision to move the schools to higher ground is supported by major seismic events, state programs and hazard studies over the past two decades," consultant Greg Winterowd wrote.

The proposal would change the county forest land to a new zoning designation, institutional campus. An additional 40 acres of land already within the city would be rezoned from low-density residential to institutional campus.

A long road

In 2010, after the district determined there were no suitable sites for a new school campus within the Seaside urban growth boundary, the City Council voted to amend the comprehensive plan to include siting criteria for schools and hospitals.

Four Oregon high schools sit within the tsunami inundation zone, three of them in the Seaside School District, former Superintendent Doug Dougherty said. The fourth is



Proposed areas to be rezoned. Part of the property is now county forest land.

Neah-Kah-Nie High School in Rockaway Beach.

A bond to finance a new Seaside campus failed in 2013, but a second vote last November was approved by voters by a 2-1 margin.

Visitors at Monday night's public hearing pointed to advantages of the new campus, including exposure to a natural environment and forested areas.

"Our community is extremely fortunate to live in an area where there are so many outdoor learning opportunities, and this campus is ideally situated to maximize contact with the outdoors," Seaside School District Business Manager Justine Hill said.

Seaside High School Principal Jeff Roberts said the district has "come up with a solution that best meets community needs as expressed in the Seaside zoning ordinance."

Public concerns

Concerns included preserving the water quality of nearby streams and disposition of the district's old school buildings.

Seaside resident John Dunzer said the district's money would be better spent on fixing bridges and upgrading the city's existing school facilities. He said public impact was lacking and district cost estimates were inaccurate.

Patrick Wingard of the state's Department of Land Conservation and Development sought additional limitations on the use of vacated school sites.

Planning Commissioner Bill Carpenter asked councilors to consider traffic impacts on Spruce Drive and Wahnana, and emergency access to the campus.

"A lot of it will come down to the development application," transportation consultant Will Farley said. "They will

look at what the immediate impact of the school will be."

More detailed site plans showing buildings, athletic fields and parking will be provided at that time.

A 'tight partnership'

In discussion, Councilor Steve Wright said the will of the voters who approved the measure should be considered.

The expansion of the urban growth boundary to accommodate the campus also meets city goals, he said.

"I'm very much in support of this," Mayor Jay Barber said. "This is the first step. This is not annexation. Water, sewer — all those things have to be determined. Without this, we can't go ahead and address these things."

Barber, along with councilors Dana Phillips, Randy Frank, Seth Morrissey, Tom Horning, Tita Montero and Steve Wright, voted to approve the district's request.

The county must still review the zoning changes and amend its comprehensive plan to recognize the new zone.

The adopted amendments will be incorporated into formal changes to the comprehensive plan, zoning ordinances and zoning map.

Annexation of the 49 acres will follow approval of the county and adoption of the city's administrative rules.

"We've already been working in tight partnership with the city," Dougherty said after the meeting. "We'll be even closer now in identifying everything that needs to be done, with all the facility components."

Seaside studies impediments to affordable housing

Housing from Page 1A

"We think that the study will provide a great deal of information for the governing bodies to be able to adequately analyze the issues we face as far as workforce housing is concerned in Clatsop County," City Manager Mark Winstanley said Monday. "It's not an issue for individual cities, it is an issue for all of the areas of Clatsop County."

He said a study that embraces the entire county "would be entirely appropriate."

"We think this would be a very good way to take a look at this problem," Winstanley said.

"I think \$10,000 is a bargain for that," Mayor Jay Barber said.

Development fees

The city reviewed a proposal from the FCS Group to review the city's water, wastewater and parks system devel-



Seaside is taking steps to address a housing shortage.

opment charges.

According to Winstanley, FCS Group last reviewed and updated the system development charges in 2008.

System development charges are sometimes cited by developers as barriers to affordable housing in the community.

A 2015 Clatsop County "housing huddle" identified

high system development charges as an impediment to Seaside's housing growth.

Before abandoning plans for 80-homes on a 15-acre parcel known as Blue Heron, property owner Max Ritchie said one of the reasons for the huge unmet need of workforce housing in Seaside is that the high cost of system development charges deters

builders from taking on projects.

"With such a huge demand for housing, I think the city should enact a temporary waiver of system development fees to encourage builders to meet the housing need," Ritchie said in 2016.

The new study will conduct an inventory of existing fixed assets, debt service schedules and ordinances.

The inventory will be followed by policy review and technical analysis. The analysis will calculate the "improvement fee" portion of each system development charge and a recommended allocation approach.

Councilors unanimously voted to move forward with the proposal.

With a budget slightly above \$32,000, data collection and analysis will take about 90 days to complete. A final report will be delivered to the City Council next March.

Internship workshop at CEDR in Seaside

CEDR, in partnership with the Astoria, Jewell, Knappa, Seaside and Warrenton School Districts, Clatsop Community College, the Northwest Regional Education Service District and Hampton Warrenton Mill announce a community-based internship program for Clatsop County students that will be kicked off with an all-day training day for businesses that have signed up, on Wednesday, Sept. 27, at the South County Center of Clatsop Community College and CEDR in Seaside.

The workshop will be conducted by the McMinnville WORKS Summer Internship Program, which was developed by the McMinnville Economic Development Partnership, and has had tremendous success bringing students in for a nine-week paid internship program with key businesses in the community.

The McMinnville WORKS Internship Program is designed by industry and community partners committed to making an easy "plug and play" internship program. The partnership manages the overall

program which includes marketing internships at a variety of companies under one application process. The internship is nine weeks, direct hire, paid, and project based. The goals include connecting companies to the emerging talent pool and creating a professional employment experience for the interns. The results are telling-companies are learning about the younger workforce, real world career exploration is occurring, and jobs are being created and filled.

Internship goals and expected outcomes for the intern are community building, leading to a pathway of economic development through industry engagement, make work visible within the community, learn application and interview processes, learning how to work, develop work ethic, recognize transferable skills, build resume, and prepare interns to enter workforce with concrete career readiness and technical skills.

To register for the workshop, or to get more details, contact us at sbdc@clatsopcc.edu or call 503-338-2402.

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