

Voters split over rental rules

Sharp divide over new regulations

By R.J. Marx
Seaside Signal

Just whose rights are at issue in Gearhart as voters consider repealing vacation rental rules in November?

Supporters of Measure 4-188 want to repeal and replace rules enacted last fall related to off-street parking, appearance, garbage service, septic inspections and cess-pool prohibitions. The measure would require home inspections and make owners responsible for self-reporting issues.

More than 200 voters signed a petition in support of the measure, short-term rental owner Jim Whittemore said.

Meanwhile, Gearhart is heavily dotted with "Vote No" lawn signs in a campaign led by a coalition of residents, including Mayor Matt Brown and former Mayor Dianne Widdop.

A "no" vote will continue a balanced and responsible cap on rental properties, Brown said, and safety inspections keep visitors safe.

"I was elected to protect our citizens' rights," Brown said. "Our quality of life shouldn't be compromised for the sake of profit."

Septic regulations will "protect neighbors from high commercial use," he added.

Both sides say property rights are at risk.



COLIN MURPHEY/EO MEDIA GROUP

Signs in regards to Measure 4-188 dot U.S. Highway 101 in Gearhart.

Whittemore said the flaw in the current law "is that it takes away property rights from all homeowners."

Measure opponent Jeanne Mark said "common-sense" caps to short-term rentals and safety rules protect residential private property rights.

Unintended consequences

According to the ballot summary by David Townsend, Brian and Joy Sigler and County Commissioner Sarah Nebeker, the measure would repeal special regulations on vacation rentals not required of other residents.

Nebeker, a Gearhart resident, spoke in opposition to the city's short-term rental ordinance in April, when she said the ordinance was too harsh and with modifications could be made more equitable.

"Ordinances and laws are only as good as the ability to enforce them," measure sup-

porter Katherine Schroeder said in a letter to The Daily Astorian.

The city has failed to regularly and consistently enforce ordinances which already regulate garbage, septic, parking and appearance of properties, she said.

According to Schroeder, an overly restrictive vacation rental ordinance will force rental homeowners underground.

"A likely unintended consequence of the City Council's ordinance is just this: unpermitted, uninspected and possibly unsafe homes," she wrote.

As of the end of September, 81 vacation rental dwelling permits have been issued, 57 of which are complete and processed, six pending parking plans, 15 working on upgrades after inspection and three awaiting initial inspection, City Administrator Chad Sweet said.

Whittemore said in addi-

tion to lodging taxes and fees, short-term rental homeowners pay more than \$300,000 per year in property taxes.

"That is a total of a half-million dollars per year paid by 84 homeowners in the vacation rental program ... all to local government."

The city budget for this fiscal year anticipates collections of about \$360,000, Sweet said.

Quality of life

The November vote is the latest step in the conversation started in 2013 when members of the Planning Commission and City Council considered changes to the way short-term rental properties are taxed and regulated within the city.

At the time, Gearhart had no ordinance requiring inspections or occupancy limits for vacation rentals.

Fourteen property owners filed an appeal with the state after adoption of regulations last fall. The state Land Use Board of Appeals upheld the city's short-term rental rules in June.

Meanwhile, supporters of repeal and replace gathered enough signatures to put the countermeasure on the ballot.

Vacation rentals have always been a part of Gearhart, Townsend said in a September letter to The Daily Astorian. "They are not a threat to our 'quiet residential community,' nor are they 'high commercial use' as the mayor claims."

Ballots will be mailed to voters Oct. 18. Election Day is Nov. 7.

Gearhart councilors like green energy plan

Support shown for Portland-based request

By R.J. Marx
Seaside Signal

Gearhart heard a request from Multnomah County and the city of Portland to consider support for a Pacific Power commitment to renewable energy.

PacifiCorp, parent company of Pacific Power, which delivers power to customers in Oregon, Idaho, Washington and California, is working on their 2017 integrated resource plan, a document to guide how that utility makes their investments over the next several years.

"They are considering a considerable investment of \$3.5 billion in renewable energy resources, part of that new wind facilities, transmission capacities and upgrade technology to increase energy output," City Administrator Chad Sweet said at the Oct. 4 City Council meeting.

"They are asking for support at the Public Utility Commission for this plan as they increase their

renewable portfolio."

The request was made at the request of Mayor Ted Wheeler of Portland and Multnomah County Commissioner Jessica Vega Pederson based on the negative impacts of climate change. Multnomah County and Portland jointly committed to transitioning to 100 percent renewable energy by 2035.

Clatsop County became the first county in Oregon and the second nationwide to join the Environmental Protection Agency's Green Power Partnership. The designation recognizes the county government's commitment to purchase at least 10 percent of its annual electricity supply from renewable sources for its operations. The County Board of Commissioners voted in March to make the pledge. Councilors unanimously endorsed the proposal to support the request.

"I would like to point out to our citizens, Clatsop County will be the first county in Oregon and only the second nationwide to achieve the designation of 'Green Power Community,'" Councilor Dan Jesse said. "I'm proud of us as a community that we decided to step up."

City Council decision clears the way for Seaside school campus rezoning

Third reading of ordinance sends campus plan forward

By R.J. Marx
Seaside Signal

Before shovels can hit ground for a new high school campus, the city needed to rezone two parcels, one 40 acres and the second 49 acres.

With the third council reading of two ordinances, the council opened the door for development of the campus, designed to replace old and vulnerable buildings in the Cascadia Subduction Zone.

"It's one more step in the process of moving forward," Seaside School District Superintendent Sheila Roley said after Monday's Seaside City Council meeting. "The meeting tonight was really about clarification of wording and setting up clearly stated ordinances that reflect the urban growth boundary change."

The property, located at



R.J. MARX/SEASIDE SIGNAL

Consultant Greg Winterow and Seaside School District Superintendent Sheila Roley after the third and final reading of an ordinance rezoning 89 acres for a high-school campus.

2000 Spruce Drive, includes the residential portion of the existing Seaside Heights Elementary School site outside the wetlands zone.

The new campus, approved by a \$99.7 million bond vote in November, will be built on 89 acres, 49 of that designated as county forest and the other 40

zoned residential. Both these designations will be changed to institutional campus, or as a result of Monday's approval, clearing the way for the campus, with a total project budget of almost \$113 million.

In making their decision, city officials relied on testimony and input from the school district, the comprehensive plan and planning commission decisions.

Late changes and updates to the ordinance contained revised tax lot numbers and other minor changes, consultant Greg Winterow of Winterow Planning said.

"What the new ordinance does is make sure we are talking about the right properties," Winterow said.

Planning Director Kevin Cupples delivered revised findings, along with a response sheet directed to public concerns.

Findings determine the council's adoption of the two ordinances comply with state planning goals as well as city and county review standards.

During a public comment

period, Seaside resident John Dunzer presented a summary of an appeal he planned to submit to the state's Land Use Board of Appeals.

In previous meetings, Dunzer said the city could find alternate sites within the urban growth boundary that did not require building a new campus.

Mayor Jay Barber, councilor Tita Montero, Dana Phillips and Steve Wright voted for the rezoning and comprehensive plan change. Randy Frank, Tom Horning and Seth Morrisey were absent.

Architects Dull Olson Weekes anticipate the design phase to reach next June, when construction could begin. The campus is slated for opening in the fall of 2020.

"We're still in the design-development phase and that's a long complex process," Roley said. "The City Council has been very helpful in guiding us through this process properly."

Approval is subject to the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners and takes effect upon board approval.

With Hood to Coast relay deal, 'We all win'

Deal from Page 1A

"This is a lot different than two years ago," Floyd said after the meeting. "The sentiment and the feeling has really changed dramatically and in a very positive way."

"They've addressed situations that in the past years that were negative and have turned them into positives," Brian Owen, executive director of the Seaside Chamber of Commerce said. "It's a good, strong partnership. We all win."

Future meetings with Hood to Coast organizers will determine details about the 2018 race, including compensation and a potential long-term deal, City Manager Mark Winstanley said.

In the meantime, the council approved the one-year extension.

"I am fully confident that we will be working together for a long time," Floyd said.

The 2018 race is scheduled for Aug. 24 and Aug. 25.

Annual event seeks to raise earthquake awareness

Shakeout from Page 1A

for at least two weeks. Preparedness lessens the strain on emergency responders who need to focus limited resources on injured and other vulnerable populations immediately following a disaster.

"Congratulations on the proclamation on the Great

American Shakeout," Horning said at the City Council meeting. "Thanks very much

for that."

"It's an event we should take very seriously," Mayor

Jay Barber said. "This is certainly more relevant to us in the aftermath of Mexico City."

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