

Enjoy the Coast’s beauty, prepare for an emergency

As a Seaside employee, my role occasionally includes public information officer duties. This involves assisting our public safety departments (police and fire) and city hall from time to time with messaging that needs to be dispersed to the media and Seaside residents.

Recently we sent out a simple release as Oregon’s North Coast prepared for its first solid storm of the season. Strong winds and some heavy rainfall were forecasted to make for a pretty wet weekend (models called for about 3 inches of rain on Saturday alone as of my Oct. 20 column deadline). Oregonians and longtime coastal dwellers are accustomed to this. And I’ve learned that most residents don’t



SIDE RAIL
JON RAHL

really get too excited until winds blow north of 60 or 70 mph and the rain causes some of our roads to flood. Nevertheless, we believe as a municipality that it’s a good idea to push out simple reminders about the steps to take to prepare yourself for any sort of coastal storm or emergency.

It’s also a good reminder for our hospitality community to prepare themselves to talk to our out-of-area visitors that may not be accustomed to the high winds and

significant rainfall. Storm watching is a common reason for visitors to come to the coast in the fall and winter months, but we often encounter visitors at the Seaside Visitors Bureau and Information Center that are surprised at the weather. It’s at that point that I believe we have an opportunity to educate about the beauty of these storms while also indicating some of the dangers. Downed trees, high surf advisories and sneaker waves are things we try to point out as real possibilities. It becomes second nature for many of us, but that’s not always a part of your thought process when you are on vacation in a new place.

Oregon Coast storms can be an amazing thing to watch and I

believe we should continue to embrace the opportunity to showcase it from our best vantage points, but let’s not forget about the community of visitors that may not understand everything that comes with this beauty.

Razor clamming opens

Were you as excited as we were that the beaches opened again this Oct. 1 to razor clamming? After 16-plus months of elevated levels of domoic acid that forced closures of recreational clamming, we’ve taken full advantage of the re-opening by placing “How to Razor Clam” ads back into circulation. We’ve also started running a “How to Catch Your Dinner” video on our social media channels and as

one of three digital video ads in the Portland metro market. After close to four weeks, the video ads have yielded website traffic increases of 48.5 percent to SeasideOR.com. The OTT format we are using (Over The Top) allows us to purchase impressions rather than direct air time, which you’d traditionally do if you were buying advertising space on cable or satellite television.

Have a thought or a question about tourism in Seaside, or maybe an idea for a future column? Drop me an email at jrahl@cityofseaside.us. Jon Rahl is the director of tourism for the Seaside Visitors Bureau and assistant general manager of the Seaside Civic & Convention Center.

LETTERS

Letters from Page 4A

During the ordinance development process, both the Planning Commission and City Council were very aware of Gearhart’s history of short-term rentals. There was never an intention to eliminate nightly rentals. The city remains open to revisiting the number of rental permits, any time. Though invited, Mr. Townsend has refused to state his case directly to the city council. The report doesn’t even mention our high-density R-3 tourist zone. Nor does Mr. Adams mention the growing influx of full-time residents who are helping to sustain and grow Gearhart’s year-round economy. These are potential full time residents who are unable to find places to live due to the short term rentals. The housing shortage in Gearhart is a huge threat to its economy.

In his report, Mr. Adams says the Gearhart economy is driven by tourism. Tourists do spend money in Gearhart. But Gearhart was hardly suffering prior to the flood of internet facilitated nightly rentals beginning several years ago. He goes on to say that nightly lodgers generate thousands of badly needed tax dollars for Gearhart. This too is false. Gearhart began collecting taxes on short-term rentals just this year. It was doing just fine long before the tax collections began. He also conveniently neglects the fact that those tax dollars are used to monitor short-term rentals and add staff.

Mr. Adams argues that real estate is so expensive in Gearhart that property owners must rent their property in order to afford it. The report peddles this myth over and over again. These aren’t homeowners struggling to make their mortgage payment. These are businesses out to make a profit. The reality is many of the permits are issued to LLCs, businesses organized under Oregon law. Also, very few transient lodging permits are held by anybody actually living in Gearhart. The majority of permit holders live out-of-town. The permits are held by residents of the Portland area, Seattle and several states, even Alaska. Not Gearhart residents.

Measure 4-188 is not about protecting jobs or caring about Gearhart’s economy. It’s about people who want to profit from their rental properties at the expense of Gearhart citizens’ rights and quality of life.

Vote no on Measure 4-188.

Terry Graff
Gearhart

Mayor Brown’s facts in question

I like Matt Brown ... heck we were almost business partners a couple of short years ago. I’ve spoken with him at several of the planning commission meetings since then. I pressed him as to his palpable passion around the short-term rental issue brewing then. I was a bit bewildered given his status as a small business person in Gearhart and even more confounding, that his business is golf and golf equipment. Ironically, this is a business that would seemingly benefit from guests from out of town who’d naturally include golf as a popular activity when visiting the Coast.

Why, I wondered would he propose the curtailment of vacation rentals in his own market area? His answer surprised

me ... He explained to my wife and me that low-income housing was disappearing and thus becoming a negative factor in recruiting candidates for the landscaping and pro shop responsibilities.

I reminded him of the lack of correlation between affordable housing and vacation rental properties. Homes that could be purchased by this wage class are rare indeed; and those homes if found would not, from a pricing perspective, lend themselves to beach rentals. But even if there were affordable housing in Gearhart (an oxymoron of sorts) why would the taxpayers be enlisted to accommodate the labor needs of a private for-profit golf course?

And now as I read this back, it leads me to wonder if I’ve overlooked the obvious ... that this heavy regulation regime will lower housing costs by virtue of the depreciating effect of such owner constraint. Some of us have already learned of prospects voicing their reluctance to invest in Gearhart now because of sagging home values they fear going forward.

David Remer
Gearhart

Vote yes

Yesterday I had a friend that moved to Gearhart recently send me a note asking why I support the current ballot measure on vacation rentals in Gearhart.

His request prompted me to voice my opinion. As a born and raised proud Gearhart boy I am really outraged by all of this. I have had the opportunity to meet and become friends with so many great people vacationing in Gearhart throughout my life. This I feel was because they have been able to rent homes in Gearhart. I really personally have not seen or heard of that many issues pertaining to short-term rentals.

It seems interesting to me that many of people pushing for the present city ordinance really are not long time Gearhart residents and probably arrived here as a tourist at first, but now really don’t want others to enjoy what they found here.

In my opinion it’s all about equal rights for all. It’s not fair that the only rentals allowed are the 80 or so that applied a few months ago. Many never know when they may want or need to rent their homes. So having to get a license now and pay \$600 a year till that day comes seems unfair. I feel this whole area is and always has been a tourist driven area. Much of all the amenities this area has to offer that we enjoy daily would not be here if we did not have tourism to support it. You may be one of the residents that started coming here as a tourist and renting. What if you couldn’t have stayed here.

Maybe you would be living in Corvallis next to some rowdy college students. I just feel the current City Council wants to put a wall up around Gearhart. The mayor wants more homes to be available for low income workers to live in, that would be great but the only way that is going to happen is for property values to drop considerably, which would not make the present property owners happy at all. I am all for regulations on how vacation rentals are rented.

Limits on number of occupants, motor vehicles appear-

ance of the house and yard, along with other issues that could become a problem. I feel both the present ordinance and the proposed ordinance cover that area properly. Actually a drive around Gearhart would reveal that many homes that are occupied by the owners would not meet these regulations. As a matter of fact, I believe there are more police calls to permanent homes than short-term rental homes. I really feel that vacation rentals with both of these ordinances will be controlled properly, just feel it is very unfair to limit them to a select few. In closing I hope everyone understands the beach belongs to everyone and we should share access to all. Please vote yes on Measure 4-188.

Jeff Ter Har
Gearhart

Gearhart is a gem

I have a high-energy dog who likes to walk around Gearhart for one to two hours a day. I accompany him on these forays. We very much enjoy the usually quiet side streets, the magnificent trees along the Ridge Path, waving to friends driving by, stopping to chat with an acquaintance we encounter, viewing the houses and their gardens, eating blackberries.

We know a lot of people by name, and even more dogs. I have wonderful, friendly neighbors with whom I can visit, usually standing in the middle of the road, because we don’t have much traffic. To me, this is the essence of a small residential town, and I cherish it.

I also want to protect it. Living in a town with unlimited short-term rentals without regulations will be the demise of this way of life. We have a gem. Let’s be mindful, and not sell our soul. Please vote “no” on ballot Measure 4-188.

Sharon Kloefer
Gearhart

Vote no

The supporters of Measure 4-188 want unlimited, unregulated short-term rentals. They talk as if they’re doing something great for Gearhart. These big-money absentee landlords and vacation rental companies care little about our community and neighborhoods. They care only about making easy money, packing as many people as possible into as many houses as possible.

They don’t care our city council with the support of Gearhart residents established Short-term Rental Ordinance 901.

They don’t care that the Land Use Board of Appeals upheld our ordinance.

They don’t care that it cost the taxpayers tens of thousands of dollars in legal fees just to have LUBA uphold the ordinance with no changes.

They don’t care that many rental permit holders support Ordinance 901.

They don’t care that Measure 4-188 will destroy our family neighborhoods and our town’s residential character.

As Gearhart residents we should be concerned, not fooled. Look at a few of their demands:

- Unlimited number of rentals. To keep Gearhart special, we need a residential balance. This balance includes rentals of more than 30 days (long-term) available for housing in

our family neighborhoods. As residents, we are and should be the backbone of our special town.

- No septic inspections. They show no concern that rentals filled to capacity will overload septic systems. This could force all residents to pay for an expensive sewer system. They are not concerned that some short-term rentals have cesspools. Do you want this?
- No parking or garbage regulations. This will lead to over-parked neighborhoods with renters’ garbage in your street.

Show you are concerned. Vote no on Measure 4-188.

Wilson Mark
Gearhart

Here are the facts

In response to David Townsend’s letter (“Other side of rentals,” The Daily Astorian, Sept. 29): Let’s get the facts straight. David Townsend is an out-of-state owner of a Gearhart short-term vacation rental, and owner of a political consulting company representing other short-term vacation rental owners.

His company is working to convince Gearhart voters to repeal and replace the current city regulations with a measure which would result in an unlimited number of short-term vacation rentals in Gearhart.

Townsend says our property values are being affected under the current city regulations. He is trying to scare Gearhart homeowners. He says you may not be able to sell your home if we don’t allow unlimited vacation rentals. That is not the truth.

Here are the facts. Since the implementation of the current Gearhart short-term rental regulations, there has been a boom in the sale of Gearhart homes to people looking for full-time residences. Houses in Gearhart have recently sold at full price after being on the market for just one day. There’s so much new construction that local contractors are booked out for over a year. Yes, you can easily sell your house today under the current short-term rental regulations.

Townsend is also selling the notion that his short-term rental measure will be good for the Gearhart economy. What really is good for the Gearhart economy is more full-time residents who patronize local businesses all year, instead of having to rely on visitors during the summer, and then trying to survive the winter months.

Vote “no” on Measure 4-188. Keep Gearhart residential.

Randy Wiltgen
Gearhart

Vote no on Measure 4-188

For the past 30 years, the slow pace, friendly neighbors and quiet neighborhoods of Gearhart have been my refuge after a hard day’s work. It’s not a tourist destination; it’s our home town. But its very existence as such is now threatened by the Internet-fueled short-term rental business and by Measure 4-188, which would overturn the city’s comprehensive plan, zoning ordinance and laws that protect residential neighborhoods from the high-impact commercial activity of vacation rentals.

As a planning commissioner and city councilor for many years, I’ve witnessed

the growth of the problem and the city’s solution to it, worked out over a two-year process of citizen involvement, testimony and deliberation. The resulting Ordinance 901 was a fair compromise for all competing interests, and is now affording our citizens protection from moneyed interests that would obliterate the character of Gearhart. It is founded on the principles of Gearhart’s comprehensive land use plan as adopted in 1994, which requires

the city to “recognize the importance of the city’s residential neighborhoods and the need to protect them from the negative impacts of the transient rental of property, and to discourage increased levels of traffic and similar disruptions.”

I implore my fellow Gearhart voters to vote no on Measure 4-188. A yes vote would threaten every Gearhart citizen’s quality of life.

Paulina Cockrum
Gearhart

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