

# Putting numbers to Gearhart's tsunami risk

## Disaster planning at top of Gearhart to-do list

By R.J. Marx  
Seaside Signal

As the city's Planning Commission met last week to discuss goals for the new year, one item rose to the top.

By applying for a state Department of Land Conservation and Development grant, the city could be among the first to develop a coastal resilience plan. The \$14,000 grant would be used to evaluate the city's risk to the Cascadia Subduction Zone tsunami



R.J. MARX/SEASIDE SIGNAL

**Gearhart Planner Carole Connell right; Planning Commission Chairwoman Virginia Dideum and Vice-Chairman David Smith.**

hazard and decide which land use measures to develop and implement to help reduce the city's risk.

These provisions would likely result in changes to the city's land use ordinance and its comprehensive plan.

"Planning with resilience in mind will help address the broad range of natural hazards and other threats that coastal communities must contend with," stated a 2015 report by the Oregon Partnership for Disaster Resilience prepared for Clatsop County.

What is now lacking, City Planner Carole Connell said, is data specific to Gearhart.

If selected among grant applicants, the city would receive data from state's Department of Geology and Mineral Industries, including the "beat the wave" modeling and mapping program and damage estimate results for infrastructure, buildings and people in various disaster scenarios.

"This gets really into the facts and figures — where do we need to harden services, what we don't know and where we should be going," Connell said. "This is taking the next step for a government to come up with a detailed tsunami evacuation facility and improvement plan. It will be detailed."

Commissioners showed initial reluctance to submit the application, especially with an impending deadline of Jan. 31.

But with much of the paperwork already prepared by representatives of the Department of Land Conservation and Development, objections faded.

The information could be used not only in land use planning but in other aspects of emergency preparedness and risk reduction, Connell said.

If the grant is awarded, the work may be contracted to a consultant or completed by city staff. "We'll still have the citizen involvement process and the adoption process so that we're transparent to get all the input we need," she said.

Members of the Planning Commission gave their unanimous consent to submit the grant proposal.

"If we don't get the award, we don't get the award," Connell added.

# SHARING SEWAGE

## Gearhart neighbors spar over septic system

By R.J. Marx  
Seaside Signal

Duplex owner Kevin Lee Willett says his neighbor Richard Derby's failing septic system is contaminating his property, and the city needs to take immediate action to stop it.

The smell from the leaking system is hurting his property's value and impacting his quality of life.

"When we get a good rain, we'll get a smell," Willett said. "But the biggest concern is raw sewage going into the ground that the city of Gearhart has chosen to turn a blind eye to."

Environmental Health Specialist Nancy Mendoza of the Clatsop County Public Health Department examined the system twice in September and delivered a notice and order to correct the violation to Derby in early October.

"The on-site sewage system is creating a public health and safety hazard for the residents of the home and for the public," Mendoza wrote.

In the notice, Derby was given three options: develop a repair plan within 10 days; hire a professional contractor to hook up to a municipal sewer within 10 days; or vacate the property within 30 days.

To date, Derby remains in his home and the septic has yet to be repaired.

"Thirty days came and went," Willett said. "They've chosen to do nothing."

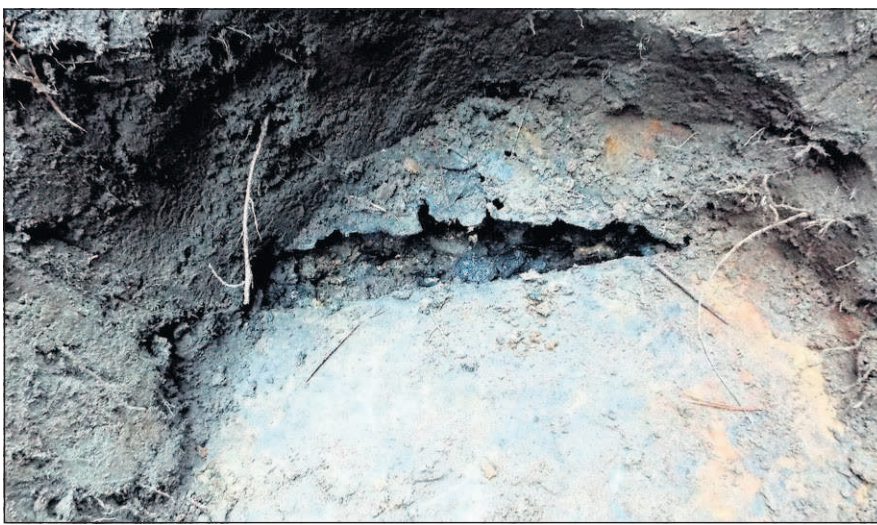
### Taking steps

Despite the delay, city and county officials say they are taking the steps necessary to satisfy all parties.

"The city doesn't just move in there and shut things off," Mendoza said. "I know it's very frustrating to Kevin, but these things actually take quite a while."

The duplex, a single-family home built in 1977 on Fifer Heights Road, is split between the Willetts and the Derbys. Septic systems are in place on both properties.

When Willett first brought the matter to the city's attention about two years ago, officials from the city and the health department walked the property, City Administrator Chad Sweet said, and found no issue.



KEVIN WILLETT

**A close up photograph taken in 2014 shows damage to a septic tank near Kevin Willett's property in Gearhart.**



R.J. MARX/SEASIDE SIGNAL

**Kevin Lee Willett presents a photo he said shows cracking in a neighbor's septic system.**

Mendoza re-evaluated the system at Willett's request in September, leading to her determination that Derby's system was failing. That triggered the notice and order of violation.

Derby denied the system was failing and has the option to conduct an evaluation by an independent professional to determine whether the system is leaking or not, Mendoza said.

"I received a call from him around the holidays stating that in fact his septic system was working, and his lawyer advised him he had rights," Mendoza said.

She said she is drafting a letter stating he may choose to have an evaluation to verify his claim.

The city will not be able to turn off water to the building until after the independent determination, Mendoza said.

### 'Vendetta'

Derby's brother, Bryan, said Willett's complaints are part of a long-standing "vendetta" and an attempt to get his family out of the house.

"He has pestered everybody," Bryan Derby said. "He thinks he can get us out, then he'll pay the taxes and move over to our side."

Bryan Derby disputed the health department's findings. "There's no seepage. There's no standing water. There's nothing," he said. "It's draining out into the drain field fine."

Meanwhile, Willett wants the city to enforce the county's October order. "The 30 days is over," he said. "They were supposed to come out and condemn it. ... They have done nothing."

Sweet said Tuesday that the October order was a warning. The city is "working on the issue now," he explained, awaiting an official letter from the health department before turning off the water to the Derby portion of the duplex.

"We're taking the steps in the process," he said. "These are people's lives that we are dealing with here, not just his (Willett's) desires."

# Dollar General to bypass review

Dollar from Page 1A

about 250 feet north of Highway 101 and Pacific Way, across from Fultano's Pizza and Bowling. The property is owned by Terry Lowenberg of Beach Development.

In their September denial of the variance request, the Planning Commission took issue with aspects of the application, including what city staff determined to be inadequate or incomplete plans for stormwater drainage, signage, septic systems, traffic congestion and fire safety.

In a traffic study conduct-

ed by Dollar General, about 285 transactions per day are anticipated, with about 142 transactions per day by vehicle. The store would see about 2,000 transactions a week.

Police Chief Jeff Bowman had safety concerns about the new store, especially turns from the shared driveway onto Highway 101, which is posted at 40 mph. Bowman said the new store would lead to increased calls for service, including disturbances, alarms and accidents.

Fire issues have been resolved, Connell said Thursday, after owners agreed to

install a sprinkler system.

Traffic plans have been delivered and are still being reviewed for minor details, Department Review Coordinator Matthew Caswell of the Oregon Department of Transportation said. The work entails re-striping the existing center lane, since the double yellow striping doesn't allow vehicles to enter and travel along the center lane for turning. Roadwork will likely be done in the spring.

Stormwater plans may undergo review to see if they meet state code, Sweet said. "The only thing we're working on that's left is to make sure their

drainage plan is adequate. Their plans seem to be appropriate."

Dollar General is set to open 1,000 locations this year, for a total of more than 14,000 stores nationwide, National Public Radio reported in December. It will have more stores than McDonald's has restaurants. The Astoria Design Review Committee last year rejected the design for a proposed Dollar General in the Mill Pond neighborhood.

"They're building in small towns all over the country," Connell said Thursday. "They're stock plans. They all look the same."

# A friendly spot in Seaside for local craft beer

Whet Spot from Page 1A

a graduate of Seaside High School and studied communication at Portland State University where she received her master's degree. After the Army, she became a government contractor, working ground maintenance on vehicles left behind when troops left for Afghanistan and Iraq. She lived for a time in Kuwait and also in Watertown, New

York, returning in 2013 to the North Coast to be closer to her grandparents. "I took a job in the Columbia River Gorge. I also drove for Uber for six months in Portland," Linder said.

One might be curious how she came to call her place The Whet Spot.

"That was Kelly Hall's idea," Linder said, referring to a friend. "She's the one who came up with the name." In a

few months Hall will be joining the Whet Spot's crew of bartenders working the taps; anyone wishing to know more about the origins of the name, can ask Kelly when she's there.

The Whet Spot promises to be a friendly but sophisticated place to try local craft beer. Linder is all about the independent brewery. Looking ahead, she envisions there could be live music some evenings. There may be great art for sale

on the walls.

"We're still developing what this is going to look like," Linder said. Stay tuned for great stuff.

The Whet Spot is located at 12 N. Holladay Drive, Seaside. Winter hours of operation are Wednesday and Thursday, noon to 9 p.m.; noon to 10 p.m. on Friday and Saturday. The phone is 503-298-3645.

"I love pouring beer," Linder said. "Come on by."

## Program for women returning to education

The Astoria and Seaside Branches of American Association of University Women and Clatsop Community College are offer a free conference about returning to education on Saturday, Feb. 10, from 8 to 3:30 p.m. in Columbia Hall of

Clatsop Community College at 1651 Lexington Ave., Astoria. For more information, or to register for WINGS 2018, visit [www.wings-clatsop.com](http://www.wings-clatsop.com) or call Pat at 503-717-1852. For WINGS Latina, call 503-338-2379.

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