

Gearhart, Sunset Rec eye Seaside school properties

By R.J. MARX
Seaside Signal

With schools on the sales block, local cities and special districts are among those that may be eyeing the properties.

At \$3.6 million, Broadway Middle School may seem like a deal for the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District, desperately in need of gyms and classrooms, after a bond plan closer to \$20 million was defeated last spring.

And in Gearhart, the city is taking a hard look at the Gearhart Elementary School property, marketed by real estate agency Norris & Stevens at an asking price of \$1.9 million.

At the city's Sept. 12 Planning Commission meeting, City Administrator Chad Sweet said, the city is "not sure" what to do with the property if a purchase was pursued. "There's a lot of interest in park space, but \$2 million for park space — it would be expensive."

According to Gearhart zoning code, the property could be used as a public or government facility, or rezoned for residential development.

The building is almost 32,000 square feet, sitting on 8.44 acres, and includes a main school with gymnasium, cafeteria; four modular buildings and covered outdoor basketball courts. No commercial rezoning at the property would be allowed.

"After talking to their representative, in our estimation that school would be quite expensive to tear down," Sweet said. "We



Broadway Middle School, as presented in a bid package from Norris & Stevens Real Estate.



Entry at Broadway Middle School.

R.J. Marx



Gearhart Elementary School, for sale at a price of \$1.9 million.

R.J. Marx

would have this space, but we're not sure what we would do with it."

Possible partnership?

Broadway Middle School, at about 73,000 square feet on 3 acres, is zoned partially residential and partially commercial. The school comes with two gyms, a cafeteria and kitchen, along with the one-story school building.

At a Sept. 3 work session, members of the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District Board of Directors considered the possibility of pursuing a purchase of all or part of the property.

The district is picking up a discussion after voters rejected a \$20 million bond proposal to expand the rec center failed at the polls in November, with almost two-thirds of the voters opposing the measure.

Board members considered factors like timing, building costs and unanswered questions in the bond's lack of success.

The bond would have funded the expansion of the aquatic facility and provided indoor recreation space at the Sunset Pool.

After the meeting, the district's executive director Skyler Archibald said he is looking for potential developers to collaborate with on the purchase of the school property as there may be commercial interests in the highway frontage.

"It's possible that the right developer would not have need for some of the recreation space that is already available, but a collaboration could be mutually beneficial," Archibald said.

Cannon Beach to purchase former elementary school

By R.J. MARX
Seaside Signal

CANNON BEACH — After years of expressing interest, committee meetings and council discussions, the city is close to a \$400,000 deal to purchase the old Cannon Beach Elementary School from the Seaside School District.

"We have a sales agreement drawn up by our legal counsel, and now it's in the hands of the Cannon Beach city manager," Sheila Roley, the school superintendent, said Sept. 10.

City Manager Bruce St. Denis confirmed the City Council and school board have authorized staff to enter negotiations to develop a contract for the purchase. "Right now the intent is to acquire the property," he said.

The Beaver Street property became vacant in 2013 after the school district closed the school because of tsunami fears.

The city owns land all around it, St. Denis said, and the property holds a high

value from a historical standpoint. "There's definitely a sentimental tie to the city for the location," he said.

Cannon Beach Elementary is one of four schools to relocate out of the tsunami inundation zone, including Seaside High School, Broadway Middle School and Gearhart Elementary School. Each is being marketed as the school district prepares a move to a new campus in Seaside's Southeast Hills.

Since its closure, residents and officials have expressed interest in purchasing the Cannon Beach property for a number of potential uses, including a community center, museum or concert venue.

The Clatsop-Nehalem Confederated Tribes has also shown interest in preserving the building as a cultural landmark.

In 2016, the building was appraised at \$450,000, with an additional estimated need for interior and exterior renovations of \$371,000. While most of the classrooms in the 1950s-era building



Cannon Beach Elementary School, closed in 2013, could be sold to the city of Cannon Beach.

R.J. Marx

would be unusable, an engineering report concluded the gym was considered in good condition.

As the school remained vacant, the city continued

to maintain interest in the property, inspired by a survey showing 77% of residents believe developing the school into a community center is a priority.

Last fall, the Cannon Beach History Center & Museum offered \$400,000 for the school, but later delayed their purchase decision.

That's when the city

stepped in, St. Denis said, ultimately submitting a letter of interest to the school district in mid-August.

The property is zoned institutional, which allows city functions, schools or churches, but not homes, condominiums or commercial development, he said.

What will ultimately be located in the space remains to be determined.

"We're absolutely considering an interpretive or event center," St. Denis said. "We have a lot of hotels that are not large enough to have a room that would allow them to have meetings."

Whether the buildings will be saved remains a matter of discussion.

"While we may be able to use the buildings later on, it's our intent to move forward either way," St. Denis said. "It may turn out the buildings are too expensive to rehab. It doesn't mean we did the wrong thing. If we can make use of the buildings that are on the site, that would be a great benefit. I think the community's very excited about the possibility."

Retiring: Longtime mail carrier plans to 'rock, roll, and have a ball'

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Gramson said he's had an uneventful career.

He's never been bitten or harassed by a dog. And he's not one to carry biscuits.

No particular delivery or event stands out in his mind as unique. He seems to take for granted his incredible memory for people, and ability to respond precisely and accurately to any question arising regarding a particular piece of mail or package. He appears to be a master of the sort of detail that so easily slip through the cracks when you're talking about a postal operation han-

dling every week approximately 40,000 letters and about 260,000 packages.

Gramson declined to embellish on his "Rock and Roll, Have a Ball" plans moving forward. The Post Master said Gramson received a plaque honoring his years of service. While friendly, Gramson appears to be a man of few words. Responding to a barrage of questions from this reporter, he kept working, slotting outgoing mail he'd picked up along his route.

The Seaside post office is always looking for good people. Contact Post Master Tony Simms if you care to take a crack at filling Mitch Gramson's shoes.

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