

Gearhart firefighters celebrate safety grant

By R.J. MARX
Seaside Signal

Last year the Gearhart Fire Department’s annual fundraiser sought to raise funds to replace aging firefighter safety apparatus. This September, they did better than that. They received this letter from the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s Assistance to Firefighters Grant program: “Congratulations, your grant application has been approved.”

The grant will bring more than \$145,000 for operations and safety.

Grant money will be matched by the city with an additional \$7,250 raised from donations, and will bring self-contained breathing apparatus to firefighters.

The equipment will be “a big help to emergency preparedness,” City Administrator Chad Sweet said in announcing the award at the Oct. 2 City Council meeting.

The grant comes to the fire department just in time, Fire Chief Bill Eddy said Friday, as air tanks are due to end useful life in December. Masks, some of which are past their recommended life, have been supplemented by used equipment from the Seaside Fire Department, those also set to expire.

Grant funds will be used to pay for self-contained breathing apparatus, considered essential safety equipment in a blaze. Each of the 22 units is about \$6,800 and includes two air bottles and a face piece, Eddy said.

Air bottles, at about 25 pounds, last about 45 minutes each.

“This grant is huge,” Eddy said.

“We were really struggling how we were going to do it. We’ve gotten donations from people to put a Band-aid on it. Now we’ll be able to use those donations to enhance that grant.”

An additional grant for wild-land firefighting was also received by the fire department, with \$8,000 from the Oregon Department of Forestry to be used for radios and turnout gear.



A conditional use permit granted for a vacation rental dwelling was upheld by the Planning Commission after appeal by neighboring property owners.

Neighbors lose bid to overturn Ninth Avenue VRD permit

R.J. MARX
Seaside Signal

As the City Council and Planning Commission propose new changes to Seaside’s vacation rental dwelling rules, Ninth Avenue property owners Karen and Todd Van Horne sought to reverse a decision granting a conditional use request for a permit at 403 Ninth Ave.

They may have been just a little early with their appeal, as suggested limits remain in the city’s discussion phase. Their appeal was denied at the Tuesday, Oct. 1, meeting of the Planning Commission.

Homeowner Jerry Johnson received approval from the Seaside Planning Department on Aug. 2, with conditions including a compliance inspection, three off-street parking spaces and a limit of nine occupants, among others. The home is in the city’s high-density residential zone.

At the Planning Commission’s Sept. 3 meeting, the Van Hornes called the approval “excessive and beyond city guidelines,” and sought a reversal of the decision. They filed a formal appeal, bringing the matter before the commission again last Tuesday.

“The over-approval of conditional use permits violates the intent of zoning and as a result we are losing our community and neighborhoods in Seaside,” Todd Van Horne said at the meeting. “The intent of these permits was for occasional use, not businesses being established in high-density zoned neighborhoods.”

Van Horne said the city has “reached a tipping point” of too many VRDs. “We are out of balance on the backs and to the detriments of our residents.”

“Enough is enough,” Van Horne said, describing “numerous issues” with neighboring rentals, including loud parties, parking violations, garbage cans, and unresponsive management.

Owner Johnson said he and his wife bought the property not as a business, but as a potential retirement property. The home complies with the neighborhood’s VRD density and rental made it an “ideal way” to meet expenses.

“We loved the house, we loved the location,” Johnson said. “We decided to see if we could figure out a way to make it work.”

The city inspected the property, made a list of conditions, and he addressed all of these, he said. “We’ve met all the requirements required by the city,” Johnson said.

His driveway can “easily” handle four cars, although the permit only allows three.

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Amidst national turmoil, civility stressed at Gearhart town hall



Deborah Boone asks a question of U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici. She asked about ways to improve civility and self-esteem for local teens.

By R.J. MARX
Seaside Signal

While the impeachment of Donald Trump was at the top of mind at Gearhart’s congressional town hall Monday, U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici fielded questions about the federal deficit, foreign policy and her position on equal rights.

But overall it was the topic of civility that dominated evening, the fifth of sixth town hall events in the state.

“it is so important for us to have a conversation with those whom we disagree in a respectful way,” Bonamici said. “I don’t think that’s being very well modeled at the top. It’s unacceptable. We can all start modeling respectful behavior of each other.”

Urged by some in the audience to take a more aggressive position in challenging the president, Bonamici said that “you find partners on issues and get things done. We have to work together to get that common ground.”

Again it was impeachment that dominated the minds of many, including Clatsop County GOP chairman Bob Shortman, who challenged Bonamici on the decision to pursue an impeachment inquiry designed to “hinder his re-election.”

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Bonamici would likely vote to impeach Trump

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

GEARHART — U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici said she would likely vote to impeach President Donald Trump based on the evidence that has emerged so far about his appeals to Ukraine to investigate a political rival.

The U.S. House of Representatives is conducting an impeachment inquiry against the president, who has said Ukraine and China should look into corruption allegations against former Vice President Joe Biden and his son, Hunter.

“In the past, I’ve expressed concerns about policy differences with this administration,” Bonamici said at a town hall Monday night

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Students find ‘hands-on’ learning makes a difference

By KATHERINE LACAZE
For Seaside Signal

As exemplified by its motto, “Hands On, Minds On,” the STARBASE Oregon program is founded on the philosophy that young students absorb more knowledge when they are immersed in experiential learning to explore the world around them.

“The kids learn a little bit better and they just enjoy it more,” said Jeremy Hand, a training development specialist for the STARBASE STEM Academy at Camp Rilea.

Between mid-September through the beginning of December, the fifth-grade

classes at The Heights and Gearhart elementary schools will be cycling through a succession of five-week programs at the Camp Rilea STARBASE STEM Academy. Each class of students is attending the academy for five hours once per week for a five-week period, which culminates into about 25 hours of robust instruction in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics subjects.

Making STEM accessible

Throughout their time at STARBASE Camp Rilea, the fifth-graders are being led by Hand and training development specialist Mike Yager — known to the

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Seaside fifth-graders Olly Fry and Asher Myers load their straw rockets onto a launcher to put Newton’s Laws into practice at STARBASE Camp Rilea.