

WANTED: CODE ENFORCEMENT OFFICER

SEEN FROM SEASIDE
R.J. MARX



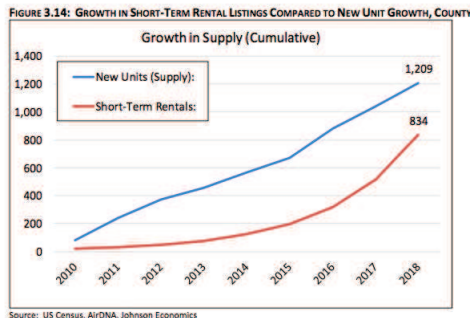
+ USE YOUR SHORT-TERM RENTAL REGISTRATION AND TAX-COLLECTION PROCESS TO DEMONSTRATE TO CITIZEN'S THAT YOU WEREN'T BORN IN THE STONE-AGE

Short-term rental compliance officer could become city's most valuable asset

Short-term rental enforcement is a fact of life for all communities on the North Coast. In unincorporated Clatsop County, the short-term rental application fee is \$450 and includes review by Land Use Planning, an on-site wastewater treatment facility inspection by the Clatsop County Public Health Department and a home inspection by the Clatsop County Building Codes Division. When a building violation occurs in a short-term rental, the building official “may immediately revoke” the permit if it is a life and safety risk. If a license is revoked, the homeowner can't reapply for a year. Clatsop County has two code compliance staff — Nancy Mendoza and Rob Ledgerwood — both in the Community Development Department.

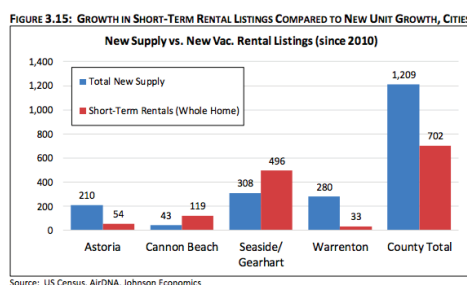
In Gearhart, City Administrator Chad Sweet serves as code enforcement officer, monitoring the city's 80-some rentals, with associated costs paid for by the city's annual \$600 short-term rental permit fee. Staff at City Hall track short-term rental complaints. “This year so far, we've received three, two parking and one barking dog,” Sweet said. The number of complaints has gone down since Gearhart's short-term rental ordinance went into effect in October 2016. “Our goal is to knock on doors, have a conversation,” Sweet said. “Talking fixes many of the issues. We'll follow up with a letter or two, and if we don't get a response, we may have to issue a notice of violation in the form of a ticket.” In Cannon Beach, the code compliance officer works through the police department. The city filled the role last year. Her work was “excellent,” City Manager Bruce

Host Compliance is one of a number of companies specializing in monitoring short-term rentals. Their message stresses, “Don't be a dinosaur.”



Johnson Economics

Growth in short-term rental housing is rising quickly toward the number of new housing units in Clatsop County.



Johnson Economics

Seaside's vacation rental dwelling numbers have outpaced new housing since 2010.

St. Denis said, and she applied and won a police position. The code enforcement position is currently vacant and being advertised. This fall, Seaside officials enacted an annual increase business license fees for vacation rentals, adding \$400 fee to each permit, based on three tiers of occupancy. The fee increase, City Manager Mark Winstanley said, will “allow for generation of enough money to pay for costs associated with the compliance officer,” including salary, benefits and equipment. Now all that's missing is the officer — a position that might not be so easy to fill. It takes a special person for the job, Winstanley suggested. “You're not hiring somebody who looks at this job and says, “This is going to be fun.” Whether under the auspices of community development or the police, the code officer will need the wisdom of Solomon and the brute force of the Terminator.

Like Seaside, residents of the coastal city of Yachats filled town meetings, protesting that the city had “fallen down” by failing to monitor the city's 138 registered short-term rental properties. Like Seaside, Yachats is in the market for a code enforcement officer, with \$80,000 set side to pay for it. But the position has proved difficult to fill, and the city manager is considering other options to enforce codes, including partnering with the Lincoln County Sheriff's Office and exploring computer software to monitor tax compliance. “We currently have a temporary employee,” Yachats City Manager Shannon Beaucaire said in November. “Once we get more data, we will determine if we will hire.” In Seaside, a salary and job description has yet to be delivered, or even a decision which department the officer will report to.

'RENT-A-VRD COP'?

Late-night hot-tub parties, cars scattered willy-nilly blocking the street, overcrowding, litter — those are some of the complaints residents in Seaside brought to city officials this year associated with short-term rental abuses. As the renting of private homes for short periods of time becomes more common — and profitable — so are the impacts to neighbors. Somebody to count beds, bags and children. Someone to study license plates and parking patterns. Cars outside are not necessarily attached to the visitors, so making assumptions can be risky. Some municipalities turn to the pros.

Companies like Harmari and Host Compliance are one way cities police short-term rentals. These rent-a-VRD cop services aim to do what cities have an increasingly difficult time doing, monitoring and collecting penalties associated with a city's growing number of short-term rentals. “Turn your short-term rental problem into a benefit with additional tax revenue and an involved community,” Harmari says in publicity materials, boasting a return on investment of a whopping 280%.

Host Compliance “has worked with hundreds of cities and counties to help them put in place fair and enforceable short-term vacation rental regulations,” they write on their website. “In doing so we have developed a deep understanding of what works and what doesn't.”

— R.J. MARX

While exact numbers remain to be determined, Winstanley said he is confident the across-the-board increase will cover costs associated with the compliance officer. “I think one of the things the council probably in the future could take a look might be to mitigate that increase, but right now I'm comfortable that will cover it,” Winstanley said. For my money, if I had any, the city's hiring squad should find an old-fashioned deputy with a heart of gold.

Newcomers hear tales of Terrible Tilly

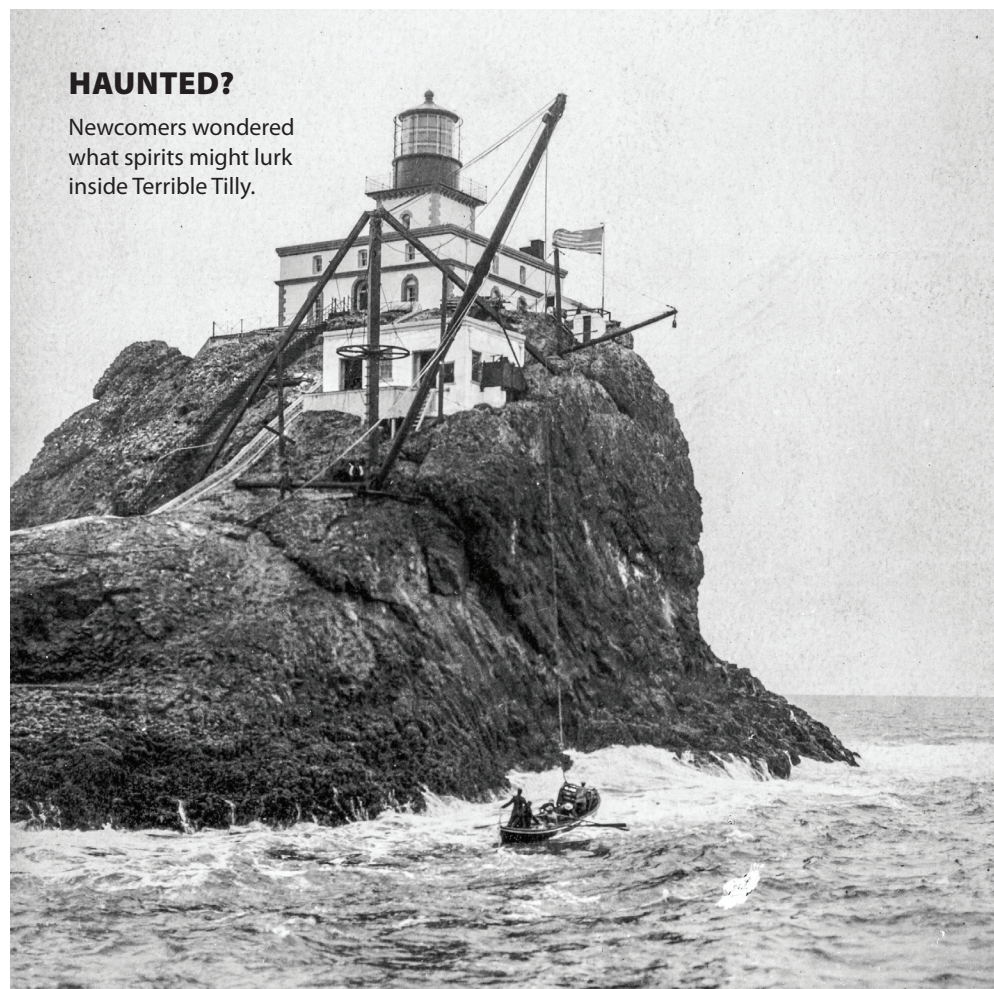
VIEW FROM THE PORCH
EVE MARX



Brian D. Ratty is a retired media executive and graduate of Brooks Institute of Photography. Ratty is the author of seven books, including “Tillamook Rock Lighthouse: History and Tales of Terrible Tilly.” On Nov. 18, Ratty gave a talk to members of the North Coast Newcomers and Social Club book group at the Sweet Shop in Gearhart. Ratty spoke about Terrible Tilly, sharing lighthouse stories for half-an-hour to a rapt audience. He recalled his grandfather who spent time at the lighthouse, describing what it was like to get to there and life on the rock. He vividly described what it must have been like during the violent winter storms when waves and ocean spray likely crashed in from the top, dousing the keepers with icy water and imperiling their very lives.



Local author Brian D. Ratty makes an appearance at the Sweet Shop in Gearhart.



HAUNTED?
Newcomers wondered what spirits might lurk inside Terrible Tilly.

Courtesy Cannon Beach History Center and Museum

Author Brian Ratty shared tales of Terrible Tilly.

revive the columbarium. Although “Tillamook Rock Lighthouse” is a nonfiction work, as an author, Ratty said he's partial to writing historical fiction featuring bold characters. He describes himself as a disciplined writer who writes new material in the mornings and revises in the afternoons. Once a chapter is completed, he hands it over to Tess, his wife, who gives him guidance, comments, and corrections. Is the lighthouse haunted? someone from the book group wanted to know. This rumor is popular as sometimes it appears a light is shining from within. Ratty declined to offer his opinion on that subject. “I'm not a lighthouse expert,” he said, smiling. He said what he most enjoyed about

writing “Tillamook Rock Lighthouse” is that he employed not only his own voice, but voices of real people who had a genuine connection to the lighthouse. Terrible Tilly received its dread-filled nickname as a result of the shattering experiences of those keepers who lived and worked on the site during fearsome, pounding storms. Back in the day, once you were on the rock, there was no way off save by boat, and with no way to call for help, keepers had no choice except to ride the storms out. Some did pay the ultimate price — death — to keep the beacon burning. These days, common murres and sea lions are the only known residents of the lighthouse. “The sea lions have taken over,” Ratty said.

LETTERS

Recall is costly, unnecessary

Clatsop County voters should decline to sign the petitions that would force a recall vote on Rep. Tiffany Mitchell. A recall will be expensive, and if it succeeds it will result in a representative appointed by county commissioners — we won't get to vote on the replacement. And Mitchell doesn't deserve a recall. Recalls should be used to remove corrupt officials. No matter what you think about her voting record, Tiffany Mitchell has honorably served our community. She's always been accessible to her constituents, and up front and honest about where she stands. Even the organizers of this recall cannot point to a single instance of corruption or illegal activity by Rep Mitchell. Voters should recognize that signing the recall petition could cost all of us a lot of money. More than \$50,000 of our tax dollars would have to be diverted to pay for a special election. If the expensive recall effort succeeds, there won't be another vote for a replacement. Instead, county commissioners — not voters — will decide and pick our next state representative. No matter how you feel about Tiffany Mitchell's votes, she was elected by the people of the North Coast, and this recall will circumvent the will of the voters and take our choice away.

Scott Lee
Astoria

MEETINGS

- Monday, Dec. 9**
Seaside City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.
- Tuesday, Dec. 10**
6:30 p.m. Gearhart City Council and Planning Commission, work session, county housing study, City Hall, 698 Pacific Way.
- Thursday, Dec. 12**
Seaside Convention Center Commission, 5 p.m., Convention Center, 415 First Ave.
- Gearhart Planning Commission**, 6 p.m., City Hall, 698 Pacific Way.
- Tuesday, Dec. 17**
Union Health District of Clatsop County, 8 a.m., Seaside Providence Hospital Ed Center, Room B.
- Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District Board of Directors**, 5:15 p.m., Bob Chisholm Community Center, 1225 Avenue A, Seaside.

SEASIDE Signal

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