

New subdivision planned for Gearhart

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

A new subdivision planned for Gearhart has drawn concern among neighbors.

The developers of The Cottages at Gearhart LLC purchased the property a couple of years ago. They expect to have an application submitted to Clatsop County in about a month to develop a 30-acre parcel off of Highlands Lane. They hope to begin developing the property in late spring.

More than 30 neighbors attended a meeting with the developers Jan. 25 at Clatsop Community College's South County campus in Seaside and expressed their concerns about the project.

Developers expect to build 21 homes between 1,500 and 2,500 square feet each. The estimated purchase price would be \$450,000 to \$550,000. The value and quality of the homes were described as a "notch down" from neighboring homes, which left many neighbors in the room displeased.



A new subdivision has been proposed for a 30-acre parcel off Highlands Avenue in Gearhart.

Hailey Hoffman

Among their concerns were elk and butterfly habitat, tsunami evacuation routes, increased traffic and the placement of a new access road.

The developers plan to incorporate the suggestions

and hold another neighborhood meeting before submitting the application.

"There are challenges, I think, especially with the elk habitat and the sensitivity of the dunes that will all have

to be considered," said Mike Weston, the consultant for the developers.

John Lowe, a neighboring property owner, believes he will be the most affected by the new homes.

Lowe's property is next to the potential development and will face three lots. He has a chain-link fence around his property and enjoys his privacy, which he believes he will no longer

have after the new homes are built.

He made suggestions to the developers to preserve his privacy, as well as help with elk migration.

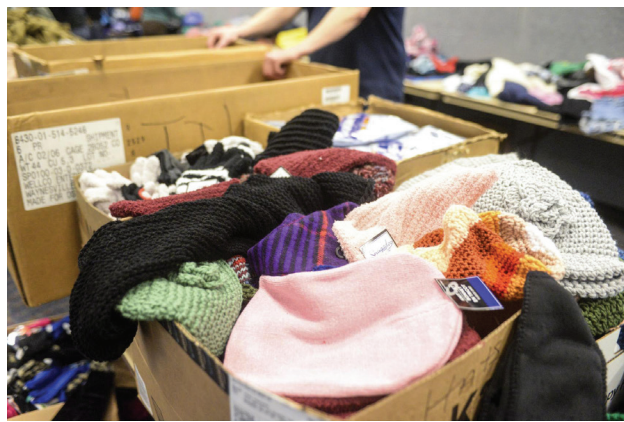
Lowe said his major concern is the elk. He said he watches the elk every day from his home and knows the property is elk habitat.

"The elk use this 30 acres for bedding, for calving, for grazing — they're not just simply walking through the area stopping for 15 to 20 minutes to graze," Lowe said. "If you destroy all this habitat for the elk then they obviously have to go somewhere else, which puts pressure on other areas."

Neighbors also expressed concerns about the butterfly habitat on the property, which sits near a butterfly sanctuary protected by the North Coast Land Conservancy.

Lowe said he reached out to the land conservancy to learn more about wildlife habitat on the property.

"Hopefully things won't go too far before they get an opportunity to provide some input into this process," Lowe told developers.



Joshua Bessex/The Astorian

Boxes of clothing available at Project Homeless Connect.

Volunteers, agencies undertake homeless count

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

Boxes of clothing sit on a table for people to take to the Seaside Civic and Convention Center for the county's Project Homeless Connect event, held Tuesday.

"I think it's a way of instilling hope in people who are experiencing homelessness who are already feeling very, very hopeless with the situation that they're in," said Susan Prettyman, Clatsop Community Action's housing manager.

"They come in and they're not judged by any agency that's in there. They know those people are there to help them."

Volunteers helped people identify their needs through an intake form.

The intake also asked people where they slept the night before, and if they mark that they slept in a car, street or camper, volunteers will ask them to complete a point-in-time survey.

The survey occurs nationwide every two years during the last 10 days of January as part of a joint effort to count people experiencing homelessness.

Other agencies, including the state Department of Human Services, school districts, Helping Hands and The Harbor also participate in the count.

However, not everyone consents to be counted. The U.S. Census Bureau describes the homeless as part of the hard-to-count population.

"I think there's still a stigma about experiencing homelessness and some people don't want to be considered homeless," Prettyman said.

Through the event and the survey, Clatsop Community Action and other agencies have identified unmet needs and have developed additional services.

The point-in-time count, for example, has identified domestic violence as a leading cause of homelessness for women and children.

Cyberattacks hit local governments

By ANDREW SELSKY
Associated Press

Tillamook County was struggling to get its computer and telephone systems running again after it was hit by a cyberattack, a week after a nearby city lost data and computer programs in another apparent attack.

"All computer systems are offline at this time, our website is down and the phones are working intermittently," Tillamook County officials announced at a meeting Wednesday, Jan. 22. The next day, county officials referred to it as a ransomware attack, according to Laura Swanson, a local reporter who was present.

"The county will be operating 'old school' for a few days," County Commissioner Mary Faith Bell told Swanson, a reporter from the Tillamook County Pioneer online news site. "No credit cards, and we'll have to come up with workarounds to take care of county business."

Ransomware is malicious software that encrypts a system, effectively locking out its users. The attacker promises to decrypt the information if paid.

County officials said in a statement there is no indication that the personal information of employees or residents has been accessed or misused. But experts said it may be too soon to tell.

St. Helens, in Columbia County, experienced a disruption in computers, emails and telephones starting on Jan. 14. The disruption is still ongoing, though some of it has been over-



Andrew Selsky/AP Photo

The Tillamook County Board of Commissioners heard final testimony in January on the application by tech giant Facebook to use an oceanfront lot as a landing spot for a submarine fiber-optic cable.

come, city spokeswoman Crystal King said.

The city government said in a statement that its phones and some emails and computers were still offline, affecting all departments, including City Hall, the library, public works and police. Emergency 911 phone number and non-emergency dispatch lines were unaffected.

King said in an email that St. Helens engaged cybersecurity experts to help investigate "the suspicious activity and to help restore access to programs and data within our network."

Columbia County has reported no intrusions.

In 2019, 113 state and municipal governments and agencies, 764 health care providers, and 89 universities, colleges and school

districts in the United States were hit by ransomware attacks, said Brett Callow, threat analyst at Emsisoft, a company that produces software to protect computers against attacks. The numbers came from a compilation of press reports and help requests the company received, Callow said.

Among victims of recent cyberattacks were city governments in Las Vegas, New Orleans and Pensacola, Florida.

Tillamook County began experiencing difficulties with several computer systems on Wednesday. The information technology department determined it was a malware attack.

"Tillamook takes the security of the information entrusted to us very seriously. We are taking

steps to prevent a similar event from occurring in the future, including strengthening security measures," the statement said.

County officials said they would work with law enforcement and hire an independent computer forensics provider and legal experts to help in the investigation. The FBI office in Portland, which has a cyber-crime task force, has offered to help, spokeswoman Beth Anne Steele said.

The attack has disrupted county business, including delaying mailing out notifications of the county commission's Jan. 9 decision to grant Facebook permission to build a landing spot for an undersea fiber-optic cable connecting America with Asia on a community's residential lot.

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