

Park and rec seeks input on potential school purchase

By R.J. MARX
Seaside Signal

Even before it went on the market, the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District eyed Broadway Middle School gym and classrooms to meet a shortage of space and indoor classrooms.

Now that it's for sale — and with a price drop at that — the district is taking a step into the water.

After real estate agents Norris & Stevens announced a 30% price reduction on three Seaside schools this month, the board elected to pursue information gathering and a public forum.

“For the middle school, all exploration is still on the table,” board chairman Jeremy Mills said at the district’s Feb. 19 meeting. “But for the moment, we have to make sure we’re in a position to financially approach this.”

The new prices represent about a 30% reduction from the original listing, with price tags of \$3.5 million for the Seaside High School, \$2.9 million for the Broadway Middle School and \$1.2 million for the Gearhart Elementary School.



Sign in front of Broadway Middle School advertises the building's sale.

R.J. Marx

The purchase of Broadway Middle School by the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District has been on the table ever since the

Seaside School District’s three properties went on the market last year. The schools will be vacated after the school year as stu-

dents move to a new campus under construction in the Southeast Hills.

Broadway Middle School is zoned partially residen-

tial and partially commercial. The 73,000-square-foot, 3-acre property was built in 1949 and remodeled in 1994.

Acquisition of the property would “expand the opportunity for district residents and guests to participate in recreation programs,” the district’s executive director Skyler Archibald wrote in a November business plan.

The school could “provide facilities and programs ... that produce a high portion of revenue.”

But the plan also notes “the challenging nature and potential risk of this project.”

Norris & Stevens provided estimates in May 2019 that demolition of Broadway Middle School could be between \$500,000 to more than \$1 million, including asbestos removal.

The business plan estimated total capital outlays of more than \$5 million, including middle school purchase, demolition, asbestos removal, parking lot conversion and contingency.

Next steps for the rec district are likely to include a community survey and open forum.

“We want to create some form of communication

within the community that we can get a test of what they feel,” Mills said Tuesday. “At that point once we have that aggregated, we can look about how we can go about disseminating information to the public.”

Archibald warned that with reduced sale prices, competition for the properties will increase. “I do think moving quickly is within our interest because it takes a while to get information back.”

A partnership with either the school district or the city could be in the offing, Mills said.

“We’re always open for that. At the end of the day, we are a community based on the idea that we all work together for the greater good.”

Stung by the defeat of a \$20 million expansion bond in 2018, the board of directors are wary of a second defeat.

“The idea that we would just make a decision without acknowledging community input or really knowing the information is ludicrous,” Mills said. “We are going to do everything we can throughout this process to make sure we honor the money we’re entrusted with.”



R.J. Marx

Recreation and community programs manager Grace Lee presenting at a November Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District board meeting.

Sunset Rec creates new marketing position

Organizational restructure after departure of Grace Lee

By R.J. MARX
Seaside Signal

The Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District will shift organizational responsibilities after the departure of Grace Lee. Lee, who served as manager of recreation and community programs at the district since 2014, announced plans to leave the North Coast.

“We’ve modified the job description so it is a marketing and promotion and special events full-time position,” the district’s executive director Skyler Archibald said at the district’s Feb. 18 board meeting. “Grace’s position was split between fitness and special events. It was kind of an awkward mix of two jobs that are pretty different.”

Aquatics manager Justin Smith will take over fitness activities previously overseen by Lee.

The new marketing, promotion and special events manager will supervise the district’s marketing efforts, in print, on the web and through social media.

The new position will handle all the marketing responsibilities for the district as well as executing special events, Archibald said.

The special events aspect of the position include supervision and management of the district’s special events including the farmers market, community dances and holiday activities.

Current information technology and marketing manager Darren Gooch will retain his IT duties, Archibald said, as well as other duties that include grant-writing, interfacing with the community and managing the Bob Chisholm Center.

“This is in no way a demotion for Darren,” Archibald said. “He didn’t have the time to do everything. This will free him up a little more, provide one person who is doing marketing, and give Justin more responsibilities, which he is really craving.”

Gearhart Elementary ‘off the table,’ for now

By R.J. MARX
Seaside Signal

The Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District won’t be pursuing Gearhart Elementary School for purchase, at least not now. The school is on the market for \$1.2 million, reduced this month from \$1.9 million.

While not directly tied to the city’s residents joining the district, board chairman Jeremy Mills said he would like to see Gearhart join the special district, which includes Seaside and much of the South County.

“Is park and rec looking at Gearhart joining the district? Yes,” Mills said. “But it’s not in conjunction with the purchase of the elementary. There’s no correlation.”

Gearhart Elementary School, constructed in 1948, consists of one main building surrounded by four outer buildings on about 8 1/2 acres. The property comes with fields, basketball courts, play areas and a gymnasium.

Seaside School District will use the property through the summer. Gearhart students begin classes in the renovated Heights elementary in September.

The property is zoned public/semi-public and limited to uses for schools, colleges or community building. It will need a zone change for most uses.

The asking price, reduced from \$1.9 million to \$1.2 million in February, could see additional costs of \$500,000 and \$1 million for demolition and asbestos



R.J. Marx

Katharine Parker, John Chapman, Rodney Roberts, Michael Hinton, Jeremy Mills and Skyler Archibald.

‘IS PARK AND REC LOOKING AT GEARHART JOINING THE DISTRICT? YES. BUT IT’S NOT IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE PURCHASE OF THE ELEMENTARY.’

Board chairman Jeremy Mills

removal, according to Gearhart officials at the city’s February Planning Commission meeting.

Currently, Gearhart residents may use the rec district’s programs and facilities, but must pay out-of-district rates.

Adding Gearhart to the district has been discussed for some time. In 2009, Mary Blake, the district’s executive director at the time, brought an annexation proposal to the city of Gearhart. Blake suggested Gearhart put the question on the fall ballot, but the vote never

happened.

In November, the rec district’s executive director Skyler Archibald again appeared before the Gearhart City Council, asking Gearhart to reconsider joining the district.

While Mayor Matt Brown said the topic was “something we want to discuss,” residents showed little enthusiasm for an additional levy, estimated at \$385 per year.

Until that changes, the park and recreation district will likely stay out of the bidding.

“We’re not interested in pursuing the Gearhart Elementary School at this time,” board member Rodney Roberts said.



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