

Vacation rental homeowners protest annual fee hike

‘Feels like taxation without representation’

By R.J. MARX
Seaside Signal

Owners of vacation rental dwellings in Seaside came to the City Council meeting en masse Monday, Feb. 24, hoping to get officials to rethink a 2019 permit hike. The fee adds \$400 per year to annual permit costs, divided into three tiers based on occupancy. Fees will pay for a code compliance officer, a new position budgeted at \$95,000 per year, designed to cut down on quality-of-life issues related to vacation rental dwellings. The homeowners say the fee is disproportionate and was implemented without adequate public input or city outreach.

Seaside vacation rental homeowner Joe Foss, a Tacoma, Washington, resident, spoke on behalf of the 20-to-25 property owners at Monday’s meeting and 38 others who submitted proxy statements opposing the fee hike. “For most of us that bill was our first notice that we owed Seaside \$400 more for our 2020 annual permit fee than previous years,” Foss said. “How would you feel about being treated in this manner, and simply expected to shut up and pay the bill?”

While not opposed to an annual permit fee increase, Foss added, “we strongly object to and disagree with your heavy raises at such an unreasonable level in one fell swoop, with no input from VRD owners and no notice other than receiving the bill. To us, this feels much like taxation without representation, a process that is not how democratic government should operate.”

Foss asked for reconsideration of hiring a code compliance officer, and revision of the permit fee scale, to be set at a much lower rate.

Foss received support from Seaside resident Lois Larson, the wife of former Mayor Don Larson, who served until his death in late 2016. An owner of a vacation rental home on Beach Drive for 33 years, she invoked her husband and his statements on owner’s rights.

“If he were still here, I believe the City Council would have handled the matter quite differently,” she said. The former mayor would have sought cooperation rather than an adversarial situation, “as we have now,” Larson said. “I don’t believe he would have been against an increase — just a fair one.”

Mike Meyer, a Tigard resident who owns two vacation rental properties in Seaside, questioned the need for a code compliance officer as opposed to



SEEKING REVIEW

‘How would you feel about being treated in this manner, and simply expected to shut up and pay the bill?’

— Joe Foss, vacation rental dwelling owner

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Vacation rental dwelling owner Joe Foss asks council to reconsider a vacation license permit fee enacted in December.

self-policing by the property owners.

“When we got this bill, I felt what we were doing wasn’t being appreciated,” Meyer said. “It feels like a penalty.”

He said VRD owners were “an easy target,” because they don’t vote in the community.

“There may be a few bad apples, maybe a dozen, two dozen, bad apples out there in terms of vacation rentals that are causing a problem,” Meyer said. “If that’s the case, pull their permits — you have every right to do that. We want to be your

partner and this doesn’t feel like the way to do it.”

Of the more than 400 vacation rental dwellings, the rental owners own real estate worth as much as \$200 million, Foss said, and represent as much as 20% of the lodging economy, raising \$1 million in room tax to the city in 2020. “We think it is important for you to know that we care about Seaside as a community, just like your citizens do.”

In response, Assistant City Manager Jon Rahl recapped a lengthy review process from 2017, including discussions on ways

to improve the process and compliance with ordinances and regulations on the city’s 426 vacation rental dwellings.

The Planning Commission’s May recommendation to raise the fee to fund a compliance officer was followed by a joint work session in late September with the City Council before two public hearings and adoption.

“Ultimately there was a rate increase renewal that went out,” Rahl said. “This represented the first increase since the initial adoption of the VRD licensing which

first happened in 1992.”

The \$205,000 raised from the fees, an increase from \$40,000 collected license revenues in 2019. The increase difference will be used to distributed to the Community Development Department to pay for the code compliance officer and expenses associated with management of vacation rental dwellings.

To reconsider the fee increase, the ordinance would have to be brought back on the agenda for hearings, consideration or changes, Mayor Jay Barber said.

Parking changes advance to second reading

Push for affordable housing in downtown core

By R.J. MARX
Seaside Signal

Seaside took a step Monday to eliminate the parking requirement for certain types of residential uses above ground floor commercial uses in the city’s downtown core.

Acting on a recommendation from the Planning Commission, the council considered the measure to make workforce housing more economical for developers and provide more affordable housing for tenants.

“There’s been a push to look at creating opportunities to allow the second story of the downtown core areas to allow for residential uses,” Community Development Director Kevin Cupples said.

Mayor Jay Barber said the ordinance was in response to the council goal to provide more workforce housing, particularly in the core area. “This is a step toward that as well.”



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Downtown parking rules for residential over commercial properties may be changed to promote workforce housing availability.

Ordinance 2020-03 creates a new zoning definition for “dwelling, residential-over-commercial,” a dwelling unit of one bedroom or less, located above a commercial establishment.

The current ordinance requires two parking spaces per dwelling unit for all types of apartments, multifamily dwellings and conventional detached dwellings.

This will bring parking requirements similar to surrounding communities, Cupples said. “That would be one parking space for a studio apartment, for a one-bedroom it would be 1.25, and for a two-bedroom, it would be 1.5 parking spaces per unit.”

The ordinance seeks to reduce regulatory hurdles

associated with developing workforce rental housing and promote more efficient use of land within the city. The measure is based on discussion and public comment from the Planning Commission, which undertook the ordinance in October.

Council member Tita Montero showed concern whether residents would be exempt from three-hour limits in the downtown parking zone.

Mark Tolan of Seaside Vacation Rentals suggested a neighborhood parking sticker for residents.

Steve Wright called the ordinance a “first step.”

“A lot of this still has to go back to the Planning Commission afterwards,” he said. “They can work

out things like parking tags, where to park, and how to keep the streets clear so the street sweepers can go through.”

He added: “I think it’s time to get this done, moving forward.”

The Planning Commission could address parking when applicants come in for development, Cupples said. “If someone went in to propose it, it would be up for review,” he said.

Montero was the sole vote against the change, seeking greater guidance in parking rules. “I’m uncomfortable not knowing what the expectations are of people living in those units.”

“We can’t put everything in an ordinance to address every situation,” Wright said. “I think this is the right step to make.”

Barber and councilors Wright, Tom Homing, Seth Morrissey and Dana Phillips voted in favor of the ordinance. Montero voted against. Randy Frank was absent.

Following the first reading, the ordinance will be scheduled for a public hearing and second reading at the March 9 meeting. The new parking rules could go to a third reading and final adoption on March 23.



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David Hunt of the American Cross with students Zoey Alexander, Caitlin Hillman and Westin Carter.

Students pitch in to boost blood supply

Seaside Signal

Seaside High School students teamed with the American Red Cross Friday, Feb. 28,

for a blood drive held in the school’s wrestling building. “We’re trying to increase Clatsop County’s and especially Seaside’s blood donated,” junior Westin Carter said.

With two juniors, Carter and Zoey Alexander, senior Cait-

lin Hillman worked with David Hunt of the American Red Cross to bring the drive to the school.

Hunt is based in Vancouver, Washington.

Carter said 56 people were signed up to donate.

Donors filled the room, from ages 16 and up.

“I’ve had donors that are 94,” Hunt said. “Some of them right here in this community.”

Input sought on state transportation plan

Seaside Signal

Now is the time to comment on the list of upcoming highway projects that make up the Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan, also known as the STIP.

The STIP is considered ODOT’s to-do list for state capital improvements for state and federally funded highway projects. The three-year, 2021-2024 draft list is developed by state planners working with local partners, prioritizing the needs of the transportation system.

Locally, projects listed in the plan include:

- Nearly \$8 million for construction of a new center turn lane and enhanced bicycle and pedestrian facilities along Avenue A to Avenue K along U.S. Highway 101 in Seaside.

- Repaving on U.S. Highway 26 from Necanicum Junction to Jewell Junction, at \$1.2 million.



U.S. Highway 101 northbound in Seaside. The state plans work to improve the roadway, with bids starting in 2021.

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- Designs to rehabilitate and replace five small culverts and one large culvert along Highway 101 at a cost of \$360,000.

The Oregon Transportation Commission is accepting public comments on the proposed transportation projects in person and, for the first time, through an online open house.

In Region 2, which includes Clatsop, Tillamook, Columbia, Yamhill, Polk, Marion, Linn, Lincoln, Benton, Lane and western Washington counties, people can comment at three scheduled public meetings:

Springfield, Wednesday, March 11, 5:30-7:30 p.m.

Lane Area Commission on Transportation meeting; ODOT Office, 2080 Laura St.

Tillamook Thursday, March 12, 1-3:30 p.m. Northwest Oregon Area Commission on Transportation meeting; Port of Til-

lamook Bay, 4000 Blimp Boulevard.

Salem Thursday, April 2, 3:30-5:30 p.m. Mid-Willamette Valley Area Commission on Transportation Mid-Willamette Valley Council of Governments; 100 High Street SE, Suite 200.

An online open house is available to read about online open at <http://open-house.oregondot.org>.

The online open house and public commenting period runs from now through Friday, April 10.

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