

SignalViewpoints



Wayne Poole, owner of Pig 'N Pancake, during a livestream meeting of the Seaside Task Force Advisory Committee on April 22.



Mark Utti, owner of several downtown Seaside businesses and restaurants, at the task force meeting.



Terrance J. Bichsel, chairman of the board of Best Western Hotels and Resorts, on April 22.

Seaside hoteliers, restaurateurs face uncertainty

SEEN FROM SEASIDE

R.J. MARX



Bookings through the end of May are all postponed or canceled, Seaside Civic and Convention Center General Manager Russ Vandenberg said last week.

The shutdown, along with Gov. Kate Brown’s “Stay Home, Save Lives” order, is rippling through the city’s business community, nowhere more than the hospitality and restaurant industries.

At livestream meetings, including a Seaside Chamber of Commerce meetup and the Seaside Reopening Task Force Ad Hoc Committee, hospitality leaders spoke of the new world Seaside and other coastal towns will face after pandemic restrictions are lifted.

“I feel like I’m an astronaut floating in space,” Seaside Director of Tourism Marketing Joshua Heineman said. “I don’t know which way is up.”

The visitors bureau is “trying to pivot” in messaging, Heineman said.

Ads inviting visitors to Seaside have been pulled from Portland metro media. “We’re trying to be constructive,” he said. “It’s fear, and I understand that. At the same time, hotels need to open. Businesses need to open.”

Brian Owen, CEO of the chamber, said hotels are a key component to reopening, with a need for strategies to keep customers and employees open after the governor’s order is lifted.

“If a hotel starts to take general travel, will they leave a room vacant after somebody departs for one, two or three days to keep their employees safe?” Owen asked. “If a hotel does choose to have a vacancy void how can they schedule that out? These choices are going to affect the bottom line and efficiency of our hoteliers.”

Terrance J. Bichsel, chairman of the board of Best Western Hotels and Resorts and owner of Best Western Plus Ocean View Resort and Rivertides Suites Hotel, said his industry had been “particularly hard hit.”

“Hotels have a very high capital

structure with huge amounts of investment capital, so it’s very challenging,” Bichsel said. “I will tell you, we have already started to change the way we do business.”

Social distancing, changed cleaning protocols in rooms and lobbies and staff training for interactions with guests are all at top of mind.

“We’re not going to enter a guest room unless the guests are out of the room,” Bichsel said.

Front desk interactions will be minimized behind plexiglass, with floor markers directing guests to maintain distance.

Restaurants will also face major changes.

Mark Utti of Damarkom Inc., owner of the Times Theatre, Finn’s, the Funland Seaside Arcade and Seaside Fultano’s Pizza, among other properties, plans to step up cleaning and safety protocols — “whatever we need to do to get open, that’s what we’re going to have to do.”

During the shutdown, Wayne Poole of Pig ‘N Pancake and Oregon Fine Foods connected with the Seaside Civic

and Convention Center to provide three weekly breakfasts to first responders, health care workers and those impacted by the coronavirus.

After reopening, Poole wonders if businesses will be able to survive. Social distancing, cleaning requirements and fewer visitors could make it “hard to be profitable on a sustainable basis,” he said. “If we have measures that severely restrict volume, it will make it a pretty difficult operating environment.”

Poole had hoped for spring break crowds and a summer to make up for the winter, “when things are marginal at best.” Poole is also concerned about getting employees back.

“Like everybody else, we’ve had to furlough or lay off many of our people,” he said. “I’m concerned about getting them all back. The labor market was tight. Now I don’t know what it is.”

Bichsel said the industry is ready for whatever comes next.

“In the hotel community, we’re prepared to tailor our services to meet this challenge,” Bichsel said. “You can take great comfort that the hotel community is prepared to reopen.”

Already facing a downward turn, funding for animal welfare needs our help

Let’s talk money.

An animal welfare charity for which I’m the education director offers a variety of programs to help companion animals and their humans live more happily and comfortably together.

As we’ve been looking for new funding in order to expand these programs to more people in need, whether due to reduced income or other challenges, we’ve discovered that the philanthropic funding of non-profits for animal welfare has taken a huge downward turn.

Even some of the biggest animal welfare funders are announcing that they have ceased grant making or put it on hold — including one of our biggest funders.

While I have my guesses, there isn’t much publicized in the way of explanation as to why grant opportunities are dwindling. I’m sure our programs are just a few of many thousands that are at risk as a result, and really, asking why isn’t going to help.

CANINE CORNER

RAIN JORDAN & DAHLIA



It is more important to focus on how the public can do something about it. If we want accessible public service programs that help everyone, and there isn’t enough funding for them, the options are few.

One possibility might be that some charities would have to close their doors.

Some charity programs might be replaced by people and companies in the for-profit sector, where, of course, profit is king. I’m not saying it’s wrong to make a profit.

But letting charity programs drift into the realm of the for-profit sector would put a lot of disadvantaged people and their

beloved pets at even further disadvantage. If a charity program that is offered to the public for \$50 — even though it’s worth \$500 or \$1,000 — goes to the for-profit sector, it won’t be \$50 anymore. That’s going to leave a lot of people out.

Another possibility is that some public service programs currently free or inexpensive would have to start charging closer to market rates in order to remain available. In other words, free charity programs would have to fund themselves by charging the public, and affordable charity programs would have to charge the public more.

Would you approve of a tax increase to pay for humane charity programs that help companion animals and their humans in need resolve the concerns between them, helping to keep them together, with both dog and owner safe, happy and well?

If you would, that’s great. Not because it’s happening — it isn’t. But because your theoretical willingness to pay such a tax can

be transformed into practical philanthropy, which by the way makes you feel good, unlike paying taxes.

Seek out charities that provide these programs, and send them a donation. Maybe even sign up for a monthly philanthropic commitment to your chosen charity, to help ensure these important programs survive.

If you own a business or know others who do, ask them to increase their philanthropic activities for needy animals and their caregivers by sponsoring a local companion animal welfare charity that focuses on providing truly humane training and education.

One that teaches dog owners “how to fish,” so their beloved companions get to stay right there with them, in their happier than ever homes.

Rain Jordan, CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA, KPA CTP, is a certified dog training and behavior professional. Visit her at www.ExpertCanine.com.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Vote for John Toyooka

We need John Toyooka to help our businesses recover from the damage Clatsop County Commissioner Sarah Nebeker has done over the last eight years implementing harmful policies for our communities.

John has been a long-standing leader and has done a lot of good. He uses common sense and real-world solutions, which will be really helpful to our current economic crisis.

Right now John is running against Sarah Nebeker and her failed, misguided policies such as rejecting the \$200 million timber settlement that our county needed. She has exponentially increased homelessness, made Clatsop County unaffordable for many working families, and now wants to put Wauna out of business!

We need John to fix what Nebeker has done and help protect our working families. Please vote John Toyooka for Seaside District 2 County Commissioner on May 19.

Stephanie Millman
Seaside

Open the beaches to locals

Today I talked with Seaside Mayor

Jay Barber. I asked him why and who made the decision of closing Seaside beach to locals when all other beaches are allowing their locals on the beach, even though all Oregon beaches are closed to visitors.

He told me he and the City Council decided to close the beach to us locals was because of the camera that is located on the Shilo Inn on Broadway in Seaside. The mayor told me he could do nothing about the camera because it was owned by the “media.” Well, in doing research I found out that the camera is really owned by the owner of Shilo Inn, Mark Hemstreet. A Portland news station said they did not own the camera and laughed, stating they think our problem is political. Let’s hope not.

This is a real injustice for the residents of Seaside, because the beach is our backyard. We are on it every day, fishing, clamming and walking our dogs.

I feel the City Council and mayor could have contacted the owner of the Shilo Inn and asked him to please turn the camera off until the governor raises the stay at home rule. I don’t think that is asking too much.

Now, I will call the Shilo Inn and do the job of others.

Judy Fralia-Mantello
Seaside

IN BRIEF

Alyssa Goin named to Eastern Oregon University winter term dean’s list

Eastern Oregon University named Seaside’s Alyssa Goin among one of 581 students to the dean’s list for the 2020 winter term.

Qualifying students achieve and maintain a grade point average of 3.5 or higher on a 4.0 scale while completing a minimum of 12 hours of graded coursework.

Emily Spalding, Danielle Keen named to Pacific University fall dean’s list

Gearhart resident Emily Spalding and Seaside’s Danielle Keen were named to the dean’s list at Pacific University for the fall 2019 semester.

The dean’s list recognizes undergraduate students in Pacific’s College of Arts and Sciences who earn a grade point average of at least 3.5.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Contact local agencies for latest meeting information and attendance guidelines.

Tuesday, May 5

Seaside Library Board, 5:30 p.m., livestream, Seaside Public Library, 1131 Broadway.

Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District, board workshop, 5:15 p.m., livestream, Bob Chisholm Community Center, 1225 Ave-

nue A, Seaside.

Wednesday, May 6

Seaside Urban Renewal District budget meeting, 6 p.m., livestream, City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Seaside Road District budget meeting, 6:30 p.m., livestream, City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Gearhart City Council, public hearing on state revenue sharing, followed by regular meet-

ing, 7 p.m., 698 Pacific Way.

Monday, May 11

Seaside City Council, 7 p.m., livestream, 989 Broadway.

Thursday, May 14

Gearhart Planning Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 698 Pacific Way.

Monday, May 18

City of Seaside budget meeting, 6 p.m., lives-

stream, City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Tuesday, May 19

Union Health District of Clatsop County, 8 a.m., Seaside Providence Hospital Ed Center, Room B.

Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District, Bob Chisholm Community Center, 5:15 p.m., livestream, 1225 Avenue A, Seaside.



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