

Two gardens, and green thumbs wanted



Mary Blake, a founder of the community gardens, with Jesse Anderson, rear, and Will Witt.

Kegan Michael French

SEEN FROM SEASIDE
R.J. MARX



It’s not too late for gardeners in Seaside to get their spring crop started.

In February, the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District took over management of Seaside’s Sunset Pool Garden and Railroad Community Garden from the non-profit Friends of Clatsop Gardens.

Garden manager Levi Conner matches gardeners with plots and helps with their crop selection. “It’s great to see the amount of interest and participation especially during this pandemic,” he said.

Seaside’s Michael Hinton was among the founding gardeners more than a decade ago.

Mary Blake, the park district’s general manager at the time, and master gardener Linda “Sunny” Hunt” wrangled 12 plots on the site of a former skate park called “Wally World,” Hinton recalled.

Students in the district’s after-school program grew produce for snacks and dinners.

Today the Sunset Garden leases full plots at \$40 per year and half plots at \$25.

The half plots are for those who may not need the extra space or want to try their hand at gardening on a smaller scale, Conner said.

Hinton, a former florist and “natural” farmer with roots in western Tennessee, again played a role in the second community garden, on South Roosevelt Drive between Avenue J and Avenue M.

He and other residents wanted to clean up eight blocks of frontage along South Roosevelt Drive, which was “kind of a blight” at the time.

With advocacy by Blake and Neal Wallace, the Seaside’s public works director at the time, a \$350,000 grant enabled the city to install sidewalks and 36 plots.

New community gardeners Will Witt and Kegan French said they’re excited to have another home away from home and the opportunity to connect with others over a fundamental skill, growing your own healthy food.

French and Witt listed their plantings as organic heirloom pumpkins, squash, zucchini, cucumber, black and yellow cherry tomatoes, among a list twice that long. They, like others, surround their plantings with flowers, exotica and black ball flowers to attract pollinators and discourage slugs.

Hinton said that neighborhood deer can be a big problem, so he tends to plant deer-resistant crops. “They love peas but they don’t like squash,” he said.

Looking ahead, Conner hopes to bring gardening classes to the gardens.

Blake suggested a partnership with Seaside Farmers Market, in which local gardeners find a market for their produce, since one bed can grow much more than what two people can eat.

Expansion of Railroad Community Garden northward along South Roosevelt Drive, possibly up to Avenue G, is another long-term goal.

“We really love the idea of a place to grow organic food alongside our community,” French said. “Where we can occasionally meet up, work together and share a laugh.”

Email communitygardens@sunsetempire.com for more information.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Vacation rental homeowners seek greater voice

My family has owned a vacation rental in Seaside for 23 years and we have always truly cared about and supported Seaside in many ways, financially and otherwise. We aren’t sure where it started, but it is a total myth that vacation rental owners are all wealthy out-of-towners who are only interested in extracting dollars from your Seaside economy, leaving our rental properties in serious need of upkeep and maintenance, and leaving Seaside to solve its own problems.

There may be some vacation rental dwelling owners like that, but that is certainly not the majority of us.

The truth is that our 406 vacation rental properties in Seaside account for about 20% of the lodging tax revenue that comes to Seaside annually and collectively we are estimated to own \$200 million worth of property in Seaside and thus we pay significant property taxes that also support your community even though most of us don’t live there.

Besides this significant support of your local economy we also provide many employment opportunities. We want to help Seaside to continue to be successful while also being the fun and very livable beach resort community it has been since it was founded. Your community has much to be proud of and vacation rental owners should be considered one of your great resources that could be even greater if only your mayor and City Council would partner with us as we desire.

If you are a vacation rental owner and would like to change the current adversarial culture that exists between the city of Seaside and vacation rentals, please consider joining our newly created Seaside Vacation Rental Owners Association that currently has more than 90 VRD owners participat-

ing. Our group’s current primary focus is to greatly reduce the recent outrageous 400% increase in our annual VRD permit fee and to push the city to consider hiring a compliance officer only half time or to consider other options to manage VRD compliance. To join our efforts simply send a request to pjoefoss@hotmail.com.

Joe Foss
Tacoma, Washington

Create a ‘brighter future,’ vote for Bangs, Toyooka

Clatsop County is blessed as a unique place on earth. We live in a region endowed with indescribable beauty, culture and assets. Our region overflows with resources capable of sustaining its own economy and providing us with innovative opportunities for the economy of tomorrow.

Our local economy is anchored by sustainably managed, renewable natural resources and independent-minded, creative people with shared values that merge economic opportunity with environmental stewardship.

However, for the last several years, too many in our community have been left out of the conversation and have been economically threatened as they seek to chart their future and nurture opportunities. Too many are not being heard or considered with fairness.

The result: needless economic anxiety, hardship, barriers to affordable housing and destructive social consequences like addiction and homelessness.

Despite pre-COVID-19 record low unemployment and increased tax revenues, many have not fully shared in prosperity, instead, experiencing hardship due to community divisions created by a few current county commissioners.

There has been an economic discon-

nect, so there is also a social and political disconnect.

There is an artificial divide resulting from local policies and choices being “nationalized” by a few of our current county commissioners.

A few commissioners make choices that do not benefit all residents and stakeholders. Understanding the “geographic equity” piece is very important.

It doesn’t have to be this way.

Commissioners’ choices can either heal divisions — or make them worse. The upcoming county commission election offers us the opportunity and responsibility to consciously build a more united community with more balanced policies that include all citizens no matter who they are, how they make their living, or how they register to vote.

We need to focus on the things that unite us. This is the only way that we can move forward into the future.

Now more than ever in our current economic crisis, we need commissioners to find economically viable solutions and address systemic issues instead of responding to an outside agenda. Currently, there exists distrust between “sides.”

In the face of these divisions, our county can still remain resilient and hopeful about its future. The only thing we lack are fresh commissioners that care, and who will listen, learn and lead.

The world will always desire safe, high-quality seafood. Nobody produces it better than our fishermen and seafood workers. The world will always require innovative wood products. No one provides them better than our loggers, truckers and mills. The world will always want our unique Pacific Northwest travel experience. No one delivers it like our restaurant, arts and recreation providers.

Courtney Bangs and John Toyooka not only understand this, they live it as

multi-generational working members in our community. Both of them will be true partners in helping Clatsop County manage its resources, navigate its economy, remove barriers to dialog and job creation, and to achieve our full potential.

Join me in creating “a brighter future for everyone” by voting for Courtney Bangs and John Toyooka for county commission.

Stephen Malkowski is founder of the award winning Arch Cape Inn and Retreat and former Clatsop County Land Use Planning Commissioner.

Fireworks show canceled prematurely

During this shutdown there are a couple of things that have not been handled here in Seaside in a logical way.

1. I understand that during the first week of the “shelter in place” rule that everyone here in Seaside got scared when a bunch of people from out of town came to the beach to get out of the house but to continue having the beach shut to pedestrians and require that everyone (at times 100 or more people) parade down the promenade together mere feet apart while hundreds of acres of open beach where people could easily be 100 yards apart from each other is ridiculous.

2. Then to add insult to injury, when all the businesses here are trying to figure out how they are going to survive they announce that arguably the biggest week-end of the year, the Fourth of July fireworks show, is canceled. I really think they could have waited at least another 30 days to see what’s going to happen with the virus before they made that call instead of adding another layer of disappointment to a situation that is desperate already.

George Sticka
Seaside