

Vacation rental owners seek permit fee repeal

‘Stop punishing us and start rewarding us’

By R.J. MARX
Seaside Signal

Short-term rental property owners returned to City Hall — this time remotely — to remind the City Council to rescind or rethink a 2019 permit hike.

“What we want is a voice,” property owner Marie Moore said April 27. “Come to us and ask us, ‘How are you guys doing?’ ‘What can be done?’ Stop punishing us and start rewarding us.”

Vacation rental property owners said the city had yet to review the fee increase, as



Seaside Signal

city officials had proposed at a February meeting.

The fee adds \$400 per year to annual permit costs. Rates that had ranged from \$75 for smaller units and \$150 for six-to-10 occupants jumped to \$475 and up, and \$550 for larger properties.

The cost is disproportionate and implemented without adequate public input or city outreach, vacation rental property owners said, asking the city reconsider the need to hire for that position at all.

“A permit increase of nearly 400% seems patently unfair and aggressive,” property owner Robert Heiney said. “The group of us feel that the city has been a bit hostile to us, in a confusing way.”

The decision to increase permit fees began in 2017, when the city sought ways to improve compliance with regulations on the city’s 426 vacation rental dwellings.

The Planning Commission’s May 2019 recommendation to raise the fee to fund a compliance officer was followed by a work session in late September with the City Council. Two public hearings and adoption followed.

Revenue from permit license fees will pay for a code compliance officer, a new position bud-

geted at \$95,000 per year, designed to cut down on quality-of-life issues related to vacation rental dwellings. The city is in the final interview stage for the position, Assistant City Manager Jon Rahl said at Monday’s meeting.

Vacation rental property owner Joe Foss, representing the 85-member Seaside Vacation Rental Owners Association, said the city was “tone-deaf” in continuing hiring efforts, especially during prolonged city closure.

Foss said city officials had made no effort to contact him or others from the owner’s association since they appeared before the council in February.

He asked for a freeze on the compliance officer hiring until the Seaside economy is fully operational, and for the city to reduce the permit fee to \$250.

“We’re not going away, we’re growing,” Foss said. “While we represent 20% of the 400 vacation owners, that number will get larger.”

Beach: Officials mull the impacts of reopening

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Councilor Tom Horning asked the city to consider Gov. Brown’s draft framework for reopening, which requires a decrease in coronavirus cases for at least two weeks, among other benchmarks.

“I want to make sure we don’t jump out ahead of that process and make a decision that isn’t compatible with the rest of the medical community,” Horning said.

Councilor Tita Montero shared a goal for coordination with the county Public Health Department, hospitals and emergency responders, as well as the county’s five cities.

“If we open the beaches and nobody has anything else open, we can rely on there being a deluge to our



R.J. Marx

Seaside’s beaches remain closed to visitors and locals. INSET Seaside Police maintain regular patrols during the beach closure.



city,” Montero said.

The council’s discussion follows a meeting last week of the Seaside Reopening Task Force Ad Hoc Committee, comprised of the city’s first responders and

business leaders.

At that meeting, state parks and recreation ranger Justin Parker advised “alignment with cities, counties and the governor.”

Fire Chief Joey Daniels

said the beach closure had limited training opportunities for volunteers, including lifeguards.

Police Chief Dave Ham told the task force that when the beach reopens, it should be in conjunction with the reopening of restaurants, hotels and retail businesses.

Morrissey’s motion for a discussion and vote on reopening Seaside’s beaches was unanimously adopted by city councilors despite a consensus on the issue.

“I would like to vote on either opening that day or set a date during that discussion when we would open,” he said.

Residents are invited to provide email input in advance of the meeting, which will be broadcast via Zoom and Facebook.

CEDR Business Category	Award Amount	Percent of Award	Apps	Awards
Retail	\$96,860	38.75%	46	45
Food Services	\$88,900	35.57%	39	39
Health, Personal Care, Wellness	\$40,420	16.15%	26	26
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	\$7,100	2.84%	7	3
Prof., Scientific, Tech. Services	\$6,520	2.61%	5	5
Info Services/Media	\$4,500	1.80%	4	3
Other Services	\$3,300	1.32%	4	3
Health Care and Social Asst.	\$2,400	0.96%	2	2
Real Estate, Rental & Leasing	\$0	0.00%	2	0
Total Funding	\$250,000	100.00%	135	126
Total Requested via eligible apps	\$505,295			

City of Seaside
How the city of Seaside and Clatsop Economic Development Resources distributed nontourism relief funds by business category.

Relief: Grant funds part of three-pronged program

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Restaurants, shops, galleries, cafes and entertainment venues operating in Seaside for at least one year were among those eligible.

A review committee of Clatsop Economic Development Resources and Small Business Development Center conducted review discussions with participation from Heineman and Assistant City Manager Jon Rahl.

Applicants supplied business start date, number of employees and how their employment situation has changed since March 15. A city business license and registration with the state were required.

The review committee met via video conference

and reviewed each application between April 21 and April 24.

Rahl developed a formula to aggregate a “top-down ranking structure” to finalize determinations, Heineman said. The final determination was unanimous among the committee.

Individual grant recipients were not immediately announced. The Signal was among businesses that applied.

The final determination allocated \$247,000 of the grants. The remaining \$3,000 in the pool will be allocated to six different businesses affected by Holladay Drive construction restrictions.

Emergency grants may be used to keep employees on payroll, pay for sick leave

or pay business obligations, including debts, rent and mortgage payments.

Along with emergency grant funding, the city’s three-part 2020 Tourism Relief Program includes a waiver of transient room tax for the quarter ending March 31. For the same quarter last year, Seaside lodging properties collected more than \$1 million for the city.

Lodging tax relief and non-lodging business grants are each funded through reserves of the combined transient lodging tax and business license fund.

All property owners received a one-time \$50 reduction in their water bills. The credits are funded through the water department.

Overall, the relief program totals more than \$1 million.

“In just a couple of weeks, Josh (Heineman) and Jon (Rahl) were able to pull together this program to award funds to the 130-plus businesses in the community,” City Manager Mark Winstanley said. “That was remarkable — that they could put that program together, to get it all figured out and to get it to the point of being able to award those funds.”

Councilor Steve Wright thanked the “blue-ribbon committee.” “I think we can trust their business judgment to put that money where it will really help.”

City councilors unanimously approved distribution of the emergency grants.

Graduation: Procession to head down Broadway

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“I met with both the senior class officers and the senior class on multiple occasions,” Roberts said. “This was their desire, and my commitment to them from the onset was to deliver on what they deemed would make this meaningful.”

Cars will line up at Broadway Middle School at 4 p.m.,

Roberts said. Graduates, assigned to the front passenger seat, may be accompanied by family members at the wheel and in the back.

For students or families who otherwise wouldn’t be able to participate due to the lack of access to a vehicle, Lum’s Auto Center will provide cars, Roberts added.

At 5 p.m. the procession will cross U.S. Highway 101

and down Broadway to the Turnaround where school board members will deliver diplomas.

The procession then heads onto Columbia to the Seaside Civic and Convention Center parking lot for valedictorian and salutatorian speeches. Graduates are expected to remain in their cars during the ceremony, Roberts said.

Family members or friends unable to attend can watch a livestream of the graduation. A video will be made available after the event.

In case of rain?

“A contingency plan is currently in the works in the event that inclement weather prevents the use of an outdoor venue,” Roberts said.

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