



Gearhart police scale back mental health crisis response

By R.J. MARX
Seaside Signal

Drawing a line between law enforcement and crisis response, Gearhart Police Chief Jeff Bowman announced that his officers will no longer be the first responders to mental health calls unless there is an imminent threat of physical harm to others.

In a letter to Mayor Paulina Cockrum and the City Council on Monday, the police chief said the social services community should step up and take an active role when people report a mental health crisis or reach out to a suicide hotline.

"The first call should be to social services, not the police," Bowman said in an interview.

Bowman said only when a subject in a mental health crisis is imminently in harm's way will police respond. "Is the subject running around the Grocery Outlet parking lot with a machete, or is he sitting there talking to himself?" he asked.

Bowman issued the directive in response to a January incident in Killeen, Texas, when a police officer, dispatched to a family home during a mental health crisis, ended up fatally shooting a man in his front yard. The family has complained that the officer was not equipped to handle the situation and has called for the officer to be fired and arrested.

"Why was this officer dispatched at all, and why did the command staff allow this officer to respond?" Bowman asked.

See Police, Page A3

Seaside East Hills reservoir project is complete

By R.J. MARX
Seaside Signal

A 5-million gallon reservoir and pump station in Seaside's East Hills is complete.

Budgeted at \$5.56 million, the project totaled \$5.84 million after change orders. The reservoir provides water to the new middle and high school building as well as Pacific Ridge Elementary. It also serves portions of Seaside. Older pump stations in nearby Sunset Hills and Whispering Pines have been decommissioned.

"This is a day we have been waiting for, not only for the school district but for the whole city," Mayor Jay Barber said at a City Council meeting last week.

Officials saw the need for the new system when voters approved a bond in 2016 to move Seaside schools out of the tsunami inundation zone. Work began in August 2019.

Through an intergovernmental agreement with the Seaside School District, the city installed the reservoir and pump station. The school district's portion included the water lines, vaults, hydrants, electrical and data conduit above the school campus and associated engineering design costs.

The 3.28-acre reservoir site, part of 130 acres donated to the school district by Weyerhaeuser Co. in 2016 prior to the bond vote, was annexed by the city in October. Ownership will be transferred to the city.

See Reservoir, Page A3



R.J. Marx

TOP: Parker McCarthy brings garbage from the ponds to a pickup site. **ABOVE LEFT:** Volunteers Brady Chandler and Sandra Heman at the Mill Ponds cleanup. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Map of the Mill Pond cleanup, with blue lines marking sites where garbage is located and purple areas represent potentially hazardous materials. The red zones are occupied sites off-limits during the cleanup.

Volunteers seek a fresh start at the Mill Ponds

By R.J. MARX
Seaside Signal

The day after Christmas, volunteers with trash bags, heavy gloves and loppers picked up where they left off almost a year before. Led by Brady Chandler of Seaside Community Cleanup, a Facebook group, they cleared tires, sodden mattresses, piles of hypodermic needles and trash buried in the wet ground or in shrubbery and trees.

"This is a nightmare," Chandler said, pointing to a trash dump just off the trail on the Avenue S side near the city recycling center. "We pulled every piece of glass and batteries out of here in February. It's all back. We're finding 20-packs of needles just dropped in the mud, not even open."

Seaside's Jesse Anderson launched the Seaside Community Cleanup early last year after walking his dog near the Tillamook Boat Launch on the Necanicum River south of the city when he found used hypodermic needles littered amidst piles of trash.

Anderson's efforts drew volunteers and assistance from the Public Works Department, teaming up to collect 50 yards of trash — 26 tons — the amount of garbage equivalent to a Fourth of July cleanup.

In the aftermath of coronavirus restrictions, cleanup efforts were sporadic.

Illegal campers returned to the Mill

IF YOU VOLUNTEER...

- Thick work boots and gloves are required. Disposable gloves provided as available.
- The city will provide trash grabbers to borrow. Biohazard bags are available for any contaminated waste.
- A release from liability form will be available for sign-in and required before participation.
- Practice social distancing outdoors.
- Donations are welcome to support future cleanups.
- More details at the Seaside Community Cleanup Facebook page.

Ponds, or never left.

Art in the Park, a program designed to attract visitors and raise awareness of the park's scenic beauty, was canceled in April.

City Council members made addressing homelessness a priority and discussed the issue at a November meeting.

Only when behaviors cross over to littering, fighting in public or violations of open container laws can police issue citations, Police Chief Dave Ham said. Enforcement is limited to housing, mental health or drug addiction resource referrals.

A follow-up workshop on homeless-

See Ponds, Page A3



Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District Children and staff in front of Broadway Middle School.

Middle school sold for \$2.15M

By R.J. MARX
Seaside Signal

Sold!

Broadway Middle School is now owned by the Sunset Park and Recreation District. The sale closing, at \$2.15 million, took place last Friday.

Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District board member Celeste Bodner said the district's objective is a hub for the community that promotes recreation for all ages.

The district hopes to increase child care, preschool and after-school activities, expand indoor recreation activities for all residents and contribute to the local economy through sports tourism.

"The acquisition of this building will facilitate this goal and benefit our community for decades to come," Bodner said.

Marketed by the Seaside School District at \$2.9 million, 3 acres of the 5.4-acre property at 1120 Broadway are zoned medium-density residential and the remaining portion general commercial. The 73,000-square-foot building includes the school, two gyms, cafeteria and kitchen.

Potential partners going forward include the city, which leases portions of the middle school property from the school district, and the school district, which has shown interest in leasing part of the property as gym overflow and locker rooms for sporting events at Broadway Field.

'THE ACQUISITION OF THIS BUILDING WILL ... BENEFIT OUR COMMUNITY FOR DECADES TO COME'

Celeste Bodner, Sunset Rec board member

The middle school is among school district properties relocated to the new Spruce Drive location outside of the tsunami inundation zone.

Cannon Beach Elementary School sold to Cannon Beach last spring. Robert and Timi Morey, of Scofi LLC, purchased Gearhart Elementary School in November. With the sale of Broadway Middle School, only Seaside High School remains to close escrow.

HTA Properties LLC, a development firm based in Gearhart, has a pending \$3.2 million contract on the property.

"The due diligence at the high school is moving along, as expected," Susan Penrod, superintendent of the Seaside School District, said. "I do not have an update on the closing date."

Owner lists former Gearhart Elementary School development options

By R.J. MARX
Seaside Signal

Apartments for residents 55 and older in the main school building. Detached duplexes composed of one-bedroom, one-bath and two-bedroom one-bath units for all ages. Caretakers' quarters, a public meeting space, a volunteer-run public library and a gym.

These are among plans floated by owners Bob and Timi Morey for the former Gearhart Elementary School property at 1002 Pacific Way.

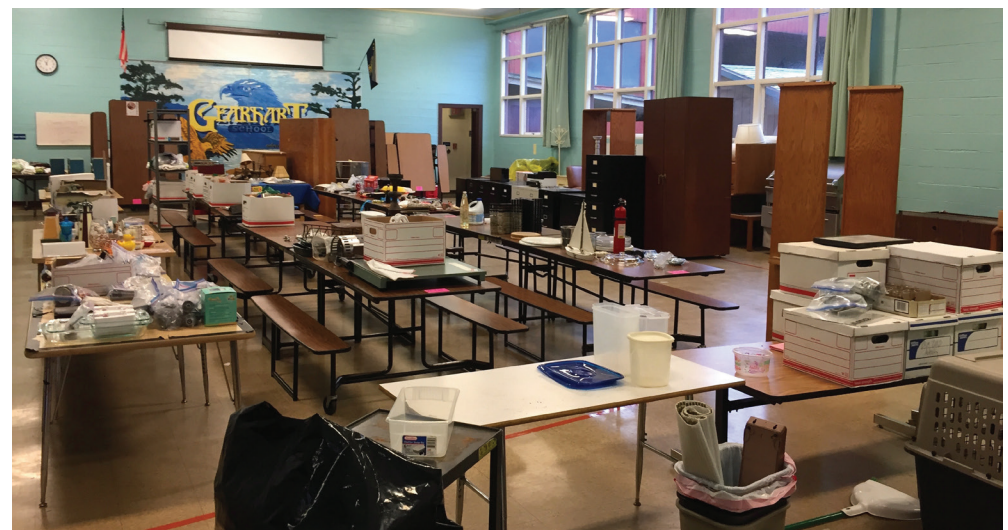
"This is the beginning of the process," Morey said in a tour of the property.

Plans are subject to modification, he said, including results of structural

engineering analysis.

Gearhart Elementary was one of four elementary schools sold by the Seaside School District as students moved to a new campus outside of the tsunami inundation zone. The Moreys, through Scofi Gearhart LLC, purchased the school late last year from the district for \$400,000. Independent of the purchase, the Morey Family Foundation made a \$100,000 donation to be used for educational purposes to the Seaside School District.

Currently used for storage, they envision a volunteer-run community library using the existing school library space. The former cafeteria would be transformed into public meeting space available for city use. Boiler and plumbing facilities may either be repaired or replaced. "At this time we are



R.J. Marx

The former elementary school cafeteria is now used for storage. Owners envision the space could be used as a possible community meeting venue.

See Elementary, Page A5

