



## Seaside seeks to address homelessness

By R.J. MARX  
Seaside Signal

Seaside wants to improve the response to homelessness.

A warming center, shelters and a homeless liaison for Clatsop County could all work to address what the city has witnessed as a growing problem.

The City Council on Monday heard from Viviana Matthews, the executive director of Clatsop Community Action, and Susan Prettyman, the organization's social services program manager, as Seaside grapples with a homeless population and challenges to the city, law enforcement and social services.

"We are not going to solve homelessness, but we need to come up with a plan when people are ready to be housed," Matthews said. "We have to be open-minded, an open door for the people who are."

Matthews said the homeless liaison, which she hopes to hire soon, will work closely with law enforcement.

"We want to make sure that this person is connected with the homeless population in Clatsop County," she said. "If an agency is having a problem with a homeless person, they would call the homeless liaison before they call in the police. I would love to prevent the police from going to an issue that is happening that could be solved instead of spending so much of our tax dollars on a police call."

"I'm hoping the homeless liaison will spend a lot more time in Seaside than in Astoria. But at the beginning, I want this person to be very familiar with how the Astoria Police Department does it."

Gearhart Police Chief Jeff Bowman announced last week 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. The police chief said only when a subject in a mental health crisis is imminently in harm's way will police respond.

Last year, Clatsop Community Action provided more than 600 services to the homeless population in the county, with about 25% of those services to clients who reside in the Seaside area.

The organization receives state, federal and local funding through grants to help people meet housing, food and other basic needs. The organization connects people with mental health challenges to Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare, the county's mental health contractor. Funds are shared with the Astoria Warming Center, Helping Hands and other social service programs.

Project Homeless Connect, an annual event held in January for the homeless at the Seaside Civic and Convention Center, was canceled

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## Seaside schools ready for students, but pandemic delays in-class instruction

By R.J. MARX  
Seaside Signal

Seaside School District campus buildings are ready for in-person class instruction, project manager Jim Henry said at last week's board meeting.

Construction is mostly complete, with a few punch list items waiting and a completion of exterior remediation to the eastern side of the building. "We wish a ribbon was wrapped on top of the buildings, but we can have students in school," Henry said.

In December, members of the construction team continued work on exterior remediation, finishing replacement of 22,000 linear square feet of weather barrier after the first application failed to meet specifications.

Work on the west side of the high school and middle school is near completion with the removal of scaffolding and installation of metal panels, Henry said. On the east facade, masonry work remains. "We've been seeing good progress. All of the tests have been thumbs up," he said.

The work is expected to continue through February.

The school booster club sign will be moving in two to three weeks.

Field drainage issues remain and landscaping work is expected to be finished in the spring.

At Pacific Ridge Elementary, cafeteria ceiling tile and security camera installation was completed in December and a new security front window installed between the office and the vestibule.



Photos by Seaside School District

ABOVE: The athletic field at the new Seaside school campus. BELOW: Remediation on the high school and middle school building's eastern facade awaits completion.



Added electrical work and final interior punch list items remain, including kitchen electrical upgrades, installation of bathroom doors and exterior door controls.

Outside, site work remains with completion of crosswalk access at Spruce and Alder.

Overall, the construction project completion comes several months after the planned fall 2020 completion, Henry said. He attributed the lag to permit delays from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Oregon Department of State Lands, which pushed in-water work back in 2018.

"That set us back quite early and we've been making it up ever since," Henry said.

Even with classrooms at

the ready, the start of in-person instruction is still delayed.

Since Dec. 20, Clatsop County coronavirus case counts have "hovered around 250," Superintendent Susan Penrod said.

With the new state guidance and Seaside School District in the orange zone, the district could bring some students back, Penrod said, offering elementary on-site learning and a hybrid transition.

"If case counts don't rise, we could begin hybrid instruction with some of our elementary school students for on-site learning by Feb. 15," Penrod said. "If case counts continue to rise, we would need to remain in comprehensive distance learning."

## Campus return is stalled by virus metrics

By KATHERINE LACAZE  
For Seaside Signal

As the Seaside School District continues to wrestle with the decision of how and when to reopen schools to in-person instruction, early learners are being given top priority for a return to campus.

"Right now, if case counts don't continue to rise, we could begin hybrid instruction with some of our elementary students," Superintendent Susan Penrod said during a school board meeting last week.

The goal is to start bringing kindergarten and first-graders back on-site as early as Feb. 15, but the school district is waiting to evaluate Clatsop County's positive COVID-19 cases come Feb. 1.

At the beginning of the year, the state returned the decision for operating schools in-person to the local level, putting the onus on school boards and superintendents to wade through the pros and cons, as well as feedback from community members. The metrics that once were requirements became guidelines instead.

"We have had, as we all know, a lot of change this year," Penrod said. "I am very thankful to our leadership team for their flexibility and our staff for their flexibility as well and to our

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## Treatment center helps addicts in their own backyard

By R.J. MARX  
Seaside Signal

The opioid treatment provider CODA sits along the east side of U.S. Highway 101 just south of Avenue U in Seaside.

Only a few hundred yards to the east, homeless encampments in the Mill Ponds park are littered with trash and drug paraphernalia. Needles by the hundreds are haphazardly discarded.

In an interview from her office in Portland, Alison Noice, CODA's chief executive officer, said staff at the CODA Seaside office are aware of drug-related activity in the Mill Ponds, a problem that preceded CODA's arrival in late 2019.

"It is a safe assumption at least some of the folks that are living back there are struggling with opioid use," she said. "It could be amphetamine use as well. Likely it is."

The Seaside clinic exclusively treats opioid users. CODA receives reimbursement for patients, not outreach, for which they rely on support from law enforcement, coordinated care organiza-

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## Gearhart residents look to invest in city parks

By R.J. MARX  
Seaside Signal

Which Gearhart parks do you frequent most?

What is the most common activity you participate in during your visits to Gearhart's parks and trails?

Are there any issues, deficiencies or concerns with any of Gearhart's existing parks or trails?

These are among questions Gearhart residents are asked to deliver their thoughts on for the future of city parks. The city's Parks Master Plan Citizens Advisory Committee sent out online and paper surveys

to determine how improvements could better address the community's needs and desires.

The committee, which first convened in July, aims to look at the "planning horizon" for the next 20 years, with recognition that land use decisions can have consequences beyond that.

George Van Hoomissen serves as the committee's chairman, with five members and participation from Mayor Paulina Cockrum and City Planner Carol Connell.

The plan seeks to avoid duplicating other city documents like the comprehensive plan, zoning ordinance or Gearhart Transportation System Plan.



City of Gearhart

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Gearhart parks inventory map.

