



City looks at paid parking downtown

By R.J. MARX
Seaside Signal

Dozens of beach towns have effectively managed parking inventory and captured revenue with a seasonal paid parking program, businessman Adam Israel told the City Council in February.

"I think it would be a great fit, a great solution for downtown," he said. "The long-term goal would be to build a second- or third-level parking structure, and use those funds to help pay for that parking structure."

The system works with an app, Passport Parking, now used in a 40-space parking lot on Avenue A next to the Elks Lodge.

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Four seats up for election on Seaside school board

By R.J. MARX
Seaside Signal

Four positions on the Seaside School District Board of Directors are coming up for election on May 18. Two of the board members, Brian Taylor and Brian Owen, have announced their intention to run. The seven-position board has vacancies in Cannon Beach, Seaside, Gearhart and at-large positions.

Taylor, the board vice president, has represented Cannon Beach's Zone 2 Position 2 seat since 2013. He is co-owner of Bruce's Candy Kitchen in Cannon Beach.

Owen, a Seaside resident and chief executive officer for the Seaside Chamber of Commerce, is seeking the Zone 6 Position 2 seat. Owen was named to the board after Hugh Stelson announced his retirement in October.

"After some consideration, I will be

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Photos by R.J. Marx

Gretchen Darnell, with daughters Lindsey Darnell and Lauren Oxley, at her retirement party last week.

'KEEPER OF THE KEYS' LEAVES CONVENTION CENTER

By R.J. MARX
Seaside Signal

The banner Gretchen Darnell wore read "Officially Retired." A crown symbolized her role as doyenne of the Seaside Civic and Convention Center.

"I am sort of the 'keeper of the keys,'" she said. "I hold the key to book the building."

Darnell started in July 1997 as the convention center's sales director. She celebrated her retirement last week in a meet and greet at the remodeled convention center.

Not that attendees needed an introduction. Her family, the Fulops, had a summer home in Gearhart for four generations that they spent time at while growing up.

She relocated to the North Coast when her ex-husband, Rick Darnell, was hired as a Seaside police officer. "Rick saw that job and said, 'You know Gretchen, this job has your name on it,' because I was always in hotel cruise ships group sales. My parents owned travel agencies. I worked for American wine cruises, Intercontinental Hotels."

The last job she had before joining the convention center was regional sales manager at American Hawaii Cruises, based in San Francisco.



The Seaside Civic and Convention Center honored sales director Gretchen Darnell on her retirement.

When Darnell arrived in Seaside in 1997, Karen Murray was the convention center's general manager. Russ Vandenberg, the convention center's general manager today, joined in 2005.

Darnell attended countless breakfasts, lunches and community meet-

ings to promote the convention center and its value to Seaside. In the process, she regaled the community with inside tales of the cat shows, bridge tournaments, food festivals and ghostly goings-on at the Oregon

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Recreation restrictions ease in Seaside

By R.J. MARX
Seaside Signal

A RETURN TO THE POOL

Temperature checks and masks will be required at check-in and walking through the facility. Patrons are asked to maintain a 6-foot distance from other patrons and staff while in the building. Online reservation is available; to sign up, visit sunsetempire.com. Staff are available from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday at 503-738-3311.

As Clatsop County moved into the lower-risk category for the coronavirus last week, the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District has lifted restrictions at the Sunset Pool and child care facilities.

"We're really hopeful and optimistic based on the daily counts the county is providing," Skyler Archibald, the park district's executive director, said. "We have hopefully made it through the last of our forced closures."

The pool has reopened and closed six times since March 2020. "I'm grateful and appreciative to our staff, the county health department, which have

been great, and our patrons, which have accepted the changes and challenges of being open and still kept their patronage really high," Archibald said.

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Aquarium, library team up for 'Maine Event'

By R.J. MARX
Seaside Signal

Only at an aquarium would visitors be greeted by the clapping fins of harbor seals. And with their approval, the Seaside Aquarium raised more than \$5,000 Sunday to benefit the Seaside Public Library Foundation.

"The Maine Event" celebrated Neal Maine, a former Seaside High School teacher, photographer and naturalist who stepped down from the aquarium's board of directors after 25 years. In his honor, the aquarium donated all admissions from Sunday's gate to a nonprofit of Maine's choosing.

"Maine's dedication to the Seaside Aquarium, the community and nature is inspirational," the aquarium's Tiffany Boothe said.

Maine selected the foundation, which he described as a public resource that benefits the community.

"There are two worlds," Maine said. "One is the nonprofit public entities and then

there's the business community. Many of them play an important role in community success and make contributions that can't be made by any other group."

Maine's connection to the aquarium stretches back to when he was a 7-year-old whose family had moved to Oregon from Nebraska.

Then, as now, he found Seaside unique as a crossroads of the air, water and people. "It's kind of a synchronizing phenomenon where those three all come together," he said. "People need to recognize that and try to secure its future. We're trashing the beaches, and trashing the ocean water, the key resource is lost."

As a science teacher for 30 years and later as founding executive director of the North Coast Land Conservancy in 1986, Maine played a key role in regional land conservation efforts.

As a member of the aquarium's board since 1995, he assisted in starting the Beach Discovery Program,

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R.J. Marx

Neal Maine, Seaside Public Library Foundation board member Leah Griffith and library director Esther Moberg.



R.J. Marx

Neal Maine and aquarium general manager Keith Chandler.

