



SEASIDE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Bond rating edges slightly downward

By R.J. MARX
Seaside Signal

A new ratings methodology by Moody's Investor Service downgraded the Seaside School District's issuer rating. The rating reflects the district's ability to repay debt and obligations.

"Moody's has adopted a new methodology for rating school district bonds that claims to standardize their review in accordance with a scorecard," the district's business manager Justine Hill said. "In that effort, they have reduced the rating on the district's bonds from Aa3 to A1. This occurs despite the fact that on every metric, the district's performance was improved since its last rating in October of 2020."

Under the new methodology, introduced in January, the school district's rating is one notch lower at A1, David Jacobson of Moody's Public Finance Group said.

"In accordance with the new methodology, we placed 637 school districts around the country on review — 304 for potential upgrade, 236 for potential downgrade, and 97 in a 'direction uncertain,'" Jacobson said.

Results are announced on a rolling basis, and Seaside School District's review was concluded last week.

The methodology, used to analyze K-12 school districts, was introduced in January. "The main factor is a school

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Gearhart homeowner sues city

By R.J. MARX
Seaside Signal

A complaint filed in Clatsop County Circuit Court claims that Gearhart is responsible for mismatched stormwater pipes offset by 5 inches, causing water to escape from the gap in the pipes, which created a sinkhole on Julie Hamilton's Fifer Heights Road property.

Hamilton wants \$50,000 in property damages and the city to permanently repair the mismatched pipes.

The city designed, constructed and has an obligation to maintain the stormwater pipe drainage system that runs underneath the front yard of the property,

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Nancy Holmes, right, chair of the Seaside Parks Advisory Committee, talks with a visitor during the Art in the Park event Saturday.

Photos by Katherine Lacaze

NATURE'S PALETTE

By KATHERINE LACAZE
For Seaside Signal

Balmy, summer-like weather on Saturday created the perfect opportunity for members of the public to visit and celebrate local parks, learn about salmon habitat on the Neawanna Creek and raise funds to enhance the Necanicum Estuary Natural History Park.

Art in the Park ... Naturally and Virtually, organized by the Seaside Parks Advisory Committee and supported by local partners, featured a trio of events at different locations throughout Seaside that accomplished all three goals.

It started at the Seaside Mill Ponds on the east side of U.S. Highway 101 off Avenue U, which is "the southern anchor" of the Necanicum Estuary Natural History Park that has been under development for decades, committee chair Nancy Holmes said.

"We're trying to get it down to some actual details," Holmes said, adding, "It's sort of the whole concept of 'a city in a park.'"

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The Seaside Parks Advisory Committee had a booth set up near the Seaside Mill Ponds on the south end of town.

Candidates evenly split on policies

By R.J. MARX
Seaside Signal

Ten candidates take center stage for the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District's May 18 board election.

Candidates have split into two groups, with the five board incumbents facing a challenge from those aligning under the campaign slogan, "It's time for a change."

"I'm joined by four like-minded people who are also very disappointed with the way the current board has discharged their responsibility to care for SEPRD," candidate John Huismann wrote in a letter to the Signal.

The incumbents — Celeste Tuhy Bodner, Su Coddington, Michael Hinton, Erika Marshall Hamer and Katharine Parker — are running as part of "ProgressforSEPRD.com," with support for the development of the Broadway Middle School as a community resource.

They present a list of community commitments, including improved self-governance, board transparency, improving the board's connection to community feedback, supervision and support for the executive director.

"We continue to engage with everyone as we expand community access with expanded indoor recreation, our scholarship programs and sensible cost recovery," Hinton wrote in a letter to the Signal on the group's behalf.

Candidates Huismann, Patrick Duhachek, Jackie Evans, Al Hernandez and

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Candidate residency at issue

By R.J. MARX
Seaside Signal

A candidate for the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District's board could win the election on May 18 but be unable to serve. A conflict between a mailing address and voter registration may put Al Hernandez, candidate for Position 1, out of the running.

"We have been informed that he does not live at the address in Seaside but rather at his home in Gearhart," County Clerk Tracie Krevanko said Tuesday. "Since he provided the Seaside address on his filing form we accepted it as it is within the district. His home in Gearhart

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Gearhart 10-year-old spearheads playground fund drive

By KATHERINE LACAZE
For Seaside Signal

When the former Gearhart Elementary School was shut down, the playground equipment was transferred to the new Pacific Ridge Elementary School — a loss for Gearhart families that could be rectified in the coming months, thanks in part to the efforts of a local 10-year-old.

Berkley Sturgell has initiated a Quarter Mile Challenge to raise funds for the city's Play Equipment Fund. The goal is to collect enough quarters to stretch the length of one-quarter mile. According to Sturgell's estimate, that is about 17,160 quarters, or roughly \$4,290.

"I know it will be a challenge, but it's definitely worth the work because it means the kids in Gearhart will have a place to play

and be active, now and in the future," Sturgell says in a video shared on social media.

Her efforts started in January, when she wrote a letter to the Gearhart City Council, imploring them to get new play equipment for local children. As a former Gearhart Elementary School student, she wrote, "I know how much the kids loved playing at the school's playground. Gearhart is an amazing small town, and I love living here, but the kids in Gearhart need somewhere where they can run around and play."

She received a response in February from Mayor Paulina Cockrum thanking Sturgell for the letter. It was shared with the Parks Master Plan Committee that is working on developing a comprehensive plan.

"The Parks Committee agrees that even though that plan is still being written, we may want to have a fundraising effort for some play

equipment before the formal plan is completed," Cockrum wrote.

After general approval from the council at its March meeting, Cockrum announced the plan is for the community to raise \$50,000, and then the city will contribute an additional \$50,000. Cockrum has proposed the Centennial Park near Trail's End Art Association as the preliminary location for the equipment.

"While the Master Parks Plan is under development, this location will be considered temporary while the committee looks for alternatives or deems this location the perfect place for a play center permanently," Cockrum said in a March post on the city's blog.

Sturgell wanted to help with the fundraising, so she started exploring ideas with the help of her mom, Nicole. They selected the Quarter Mile Challenge.

"I thought it was a cool

way to do it, and would be different from the other fundraising," Sturgell said. She likes that the fundraiser is accessible to anyone, even if they just have a couple spare quarters lying around.

In addition to the video, she also created flyers to post around town, letting the public know they can bring their quarters to the drop box at the Windermere Realty Trust office downtown, or she can pick them up. There are also jars at the Sweet Shop Gearhart and By the Way, or donations can be made directly to the City of Gearhart and designated for the Play Equipment Fund.

So far, the fundraising is going strong. As of last week, nearly \$14,000 had been raised in total. Yet Sturgell plans to continue her quarter campaign through the end of the month. On April 30, she will take the quarters to either the new Seaside High School campus or the old one, and lay them around the



Gearhart resident Berkley Sturgell, 10, initiated the Quarter Mile Challenge to raise funds for a new playground in Gearhart.

Katherine Lacaze

track to see if they go the full one-quarter mile.

"I have a younger brother and sister, and I think that it would be amazing for them to have a place to play,"

Sturgell wrote in her original letter. "In the future, it will be important for the kids in Gearhart to have a playground that is accessible to everyone."

