

# No place to go for homeless

**SEEN FROM SEASIDE**

R.J. MARX



“Martha Stewart doesn’t live here,” reads a makeshift sign posted to a tree in a Mill Ponds encampment. A tangled picket fence made out of sticks creates an outer border and sense of space. Nearby, a tent, pizza box and a scattered collection of personal belongings. A vase filled with fresh flowers lends a splash of color under the pine branches. The Signal spoke to Jeremy Garcia, who set up the camp.

**Q: How long have you been here?**  
**A:** Oh, since last year.  
**Q: Are you working? Are you looking for work?**  
**A:** I’m absolutely looking for work.  
**Q: What do you do?**  
**A:** I worked at all three Presbyterian hospitals in Albuquerque (New Mexico), and I did the fire alarm system and electrical systems. I also worked at America Online before they went under. I was a coach. I had six teams of 30 people.  
**Q: Did you say your wife’s here with you?**  
**A:** She’s out right now. But she’s normally here.  
**Q: That’s a beautiful bouquet by the tent.**  
**A:** Those are her flowers. It’s not like, “Oh, I screwed up and got her flowers.” I didn’t screw up, they’re just a present.  
**Q: How do you handle food? Do you have some savings or any money? Do you get some welfare checks or food stamps?**  
**A:** Not even, not even. My wife really doesn’t believe in taking money from the



Photos by R.J. Marx

**ABOVE:** Jeremy Garcia in front of the tent he shares with his wife and their dog at the Mill Ponds. **RIGHT:** Garcia at his camp site at Mill Ponds.



government. What we do is, we can a lot. I do get food stamps. But we struggle a lot of the time. She has a son in Washington that she helps out with whatever money she can send him.  
**Q: If I can ask you, how did you lose your digs in Albuquerque?**  
**A:** I started having grand mal seizures. And I fell down at work, split my hand open, split my head open. They said “you are now a liability,” and they fired me.  
**Q: Are you entitled to medical benefits or insurance?**  
**A:** Since I moved to Oregon, I got a lawyer in Portland. I haven’t been able to

get over the lack of a phone. The lack of a phone really, really does me under.  
**Q: The Seaside City Council is addressing homelessness now on a city-wide level. Do you have thoughts on that?**  
**A:** I’m also an advocate for the homeless. I can go two ways with it. If they’re on drugs, they need to be harassed. But if they’re not on drugs, then there’s no reason that the police should continue to harass them knowing that they are not a threat. So I’m kind of trying to fight that battle right now.  
 A lot of the drug addicts around here kind of got mad at us because we told them

we don’t want needles out here. I’ve been picking up all the needles and caps, and all the drug paraphernalia, getting sharps containers, disposing of it correctly. I just do it on my own. I lived a lifestyle in the past of the same sort, but I had enough respect to keep all that stuff out of the eye of the public, out of the eye of the children. We don’t want drugs out here. Those guys wrecked the place. If it wasn’t for all the trash they left behind, we would be welcome here.  
**Q: Would you live in a house if available?**  
**A:** Absolutely.  
**Q: Would you live in a trailer?**  
**A:** Absolutely.  
**Q: So you don’t want to be here? You’re not camping for fun.**  
**A:** No. I can work for room and board. My wife and I, we’re both fully capable.

**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

**Incumbents will lead park district to full potential**

We always feel a deep sense of respect and admiration for citizens who step up to serve their community in elected positions. These are often thankless jobs and are often caught up in controversy and criticism. Saying all that we are thanking all of the candidates for the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District, 5 incumbents and five challengers who have been willing to step up to serve. We will be voting for the five incumbents in this case: Su Coddington, Celeste Tuhy Bodner, Michael A Hinton, Erika Marshall Hamer and Katharine Parker. These five directors made a bold decision to purchase the old Broadway Middle School in an effort to preserve this land for public use and to expand the recreational and childcare needs of the district. A controversial decision for sure! Some think irresponsible others think bold and farsighted. The district now owns that property and what we haven’t heard from any of the challengers is what their plan or strategy is to develop and utilize the property the district now owns. Do they plan to give it back to the school district? On the other hand, the SEPRD board and their executive director are proceeding with aggressive plans and financial analysis on how best to utilize the facility to best serve the taxpayers in the district. We, as taxpayers in the district would like to give the directors and the leadership of the district the opportunity to see this project out to its full potential. Let’s not change horses in midstream!  
**Jay and Jan Barber**  
 Seaside

**Will work to provide foresight, insight, oversight**

In response to Michael Hinton’s letter to the editor, let’s just set a few things straight. The Sunset Empire Park and Recreation district should focus on services to the public as a whole and should benefit everyone equally, without preferences for niche groups. If the park district is currently operating equitably, why are discounts given to city employees? Employees, living within and outside the park district, are offered services for almost half of what residents are charged. Is this fair and equitable?

Michael Hinton states “We’ve saved our residents about \$14 million and will generate millions in revenue that feed our local economy.” The current board borrowed \$2.5 million to purchase Broadway Middle School. The estimate they obtained in December 2020 indicated that \$5.2 million in repairs would be required for the severely damaged structure, antiquated heating system and asbestos removal. The insurance company had “major concerns moving forward” and indicated that “before the building should even be considered for any occupancy/use” they should “wait for the structural report” and “follow through with (possible) repairs on the following items,” asbestos, roofs, structural issues, and HVAC. The insurance company would not insure the building for replacement value, and offers no additional coverages for debris and pollution cleanup. Where are the millions in savings Mr. Hinton is alluding to?  
 Hinton indicates that the flex-lease utilized to purchase Broadway Middle School “is a manageable debt within a carefully crafted budget.” Tens of thousands of taxpayer dollars have been spent on consultants and contractors, and still no business plan. The district is actively searching for a consultant to figure out a use for the already purchased property. Their request for proposal indicates “the district is prepared to budget and fund the repayment of the loan, but in order to implement the HABU (highest and best use) recommendations, the district will need to identify other revenue sources including but not necessarily limited to grants, tenant improvement contributions, appropriate collaborative investment agreements, etc.” There is and never has been a plan for the property, just a snap decision to purchase it.  
 Contrary to Mr. Hinton’s comments, none of the above is misinformation. The data was obtained through a public records request from Sunset Empire Park and Recreation. Hinton stating that the district tax rate was established in 1969 is misinformation. It was established in 1997, after the passage on Measure 47/50 and a previous failed bond measure.  
 I will work for a dedicated capital budget for renovation, rather than relying on loans, and fight for a five-year capital spending budget. I will invest in the pool to reduce the nearly \$1 million in personnel services and materials required to run it. I will team with local organizations in the development of outdoor hiking and biking trails. I will work on the foresight of

the district, provide insight and oversight to ensure prudent use of all assets, people and good will towards the community.  
 Its time for a change and I ask to be considered for your vote.  
**Patrick Duhachek**  
 Seaside  
**Insensitive lyrics, inappropriate music at pool**  
 According to CNN, 47 mass killings have occurred in a month from March 16 through April 16. On Tuesday, March 30, one of the songs being played in the pool during the 10 o’clock swim was “Pumped Up Kicks,” by Foster The People. Some of the lyrics go like this:  
 “All the other kids with the pumped up kicks  
 You better run, better run, out run my gun  
 You better run, better run, faster than my bullet.”  
 I sent two emails regarding this incident. One to board chair Katharine Parker who, “thanked me for my feedback” and told me to “have a great evening!” (Is that all the board chair had to say about this egregious situation? Are you kidding me?)  
 The other email went to Justin Smith the pool manager. I am relieved to report that Justin responded to my email because the music being played the next day was far more appropriate.  
 However, the mere fact that the lifeguards on duty are at liberty to even play this sort of music, (and I use the term “music” loosely), needs to be addressed.  
 Once again I ask the board to establish strict guidelines as to the genre of music to be played. Furthermore, the music should be appropriate for those who are using the pool. I don’t think, “Highway to Hell” by AC/DC is an appropriate selection for any audience, especially the morning arthritis class being held in the therapy pool! I would also ask that gangsta rap, indie pop and heavy metal also be prohibited from being played at any time.  
**Marti Wajc**  
 Seaside  
**Be sure to vote**  
 Next week we will receive our voters’ pamphlet and ballot for this year’s special election. This election chooses leaders for our community college, local school districts, port, water, health and fire districts,

and transportation services. These folks will be responsible for leading our agencies in carrying out the services we depend on every day. This is what citizen-led government is all about. Read the voters’ pamphlet, make sure you’re a registered voter, then vote. Voting is our responsibility as citizens.  
 The voters’ pamphlet will be mailed Friday April 23, ballots mailed Thursday April 29, last day to register is Tuesday April 27, and ballots are due by election day Tuesday May 18. Ballots can be mailed, or dropped off at 7 convenient local election drop boxes around the county. If you use a drop box your ballot must be in the box by 8 p.m. of election day. Voting is our most basic act of citizenship. Not voting is giving up your voice.  
**Rebecca Read**  
 Seaside  
**It’s ‘Time for a Change’ at park district**  
 Reelect!  
 Folks, this is not correct. Reelect does not honestly label the four ladies running for the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District board. You cannot reelect someone if they were never elected. Only one person on the current board was elected and he has been there for 19 years; maybe it’s time for a change. The rest were hand-selected.  
 Sure, they will tell you it was a rigorous selection. I know this is not true. I was on the board for a short time and I was elected. I won my seat by talking to the voters and promising I would do my best for them. Unfortunately, I was asked to leave because I was told we would not be able to replace the pool instructors if they quit; as they had promised to do if the board forced them to get certified. I didn’t believe this was the case so I posted an ad in the Nextdoor app to see if there was anyone who might be interested. I was told I had to resign, not realizing a recall was the only way I could be removed.  
 Reelect is an untruth and they are aware of this lie.  
 Under the direction and encouragement of the executive director, this board spent taxpayers money like it grows on trees. The purchase of a very old questionable unsafe building. They paid \$2.5 million of taxpayer money and say they saved you millions. Time for a Change.  
**Lindsey Morrison**  
 Seaside

**PUBLIC MEETINGS**

**Contact local agencies for latest meeting information and attendance guidelines.**  
**TUESDAY, MAY 4**  
**Seaside Planning Commission**, 6 p.m., 989 Broadway.

**WEDNESDAY, MAY 5**  
**Seaside Urban Renewal Budget meeting**, 6 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.  
**Seaside Improvement Commission**, 6 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

**Gearhart City Council**, 6 p.m., work session, cityofgearhart.com.  
**THURSDAY, MAY 6**  
**Gearhart City Council**, 5 p.m., public hearing, state revenue sharing, cityofgearhart.com.

**MONDAY, MAY 10**  
**Seaside City Council**, 7 p.m., cityofseaside.us.  
**TUESDAY, MAY 18**  
**Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District Board of Directors**, 5:15 p.m., 1225 Avenue A.

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