



Park district forum targets issues

By KATHERINE LACAZE
For Seaside Signal

Candidates for the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District met at a forum last Thursday night to discuss their thoughts on transparency, the controversial purchase of the former Broadway Middle School building and other pressing issues facing the board.

The forum, hosted by the Seaside Signal and the American Association of University Women Seaside Chapter at the Bob Chisholm Community Cen-



Jackie Evans (center), candidate for Sunset Empire Park and Recreation's board of directors Position 4, shares opening statements during a candidates forum.

ter, featured the park district's five directors and their five challengers.

While those vying to unseat the board have fre-

quently appeared together in campaign materials and echo many of the same concerns about the park district, they maintain that they're

not necessarily running as a coalition, but as individuals with distinct ideas and skill sets.

"I would not say there's one philosophy that we all agree with completely," said John Huismann, who is running against board member Celeste Bodner. "We all have different things we're interested in pursuing."

Based on Huismann's comments during the forum, the main issue for him is the state of the Sunset Pool, which he claims has gone downhill since 2016.

See Forum, Page A6

In new \$3M budget, park district sees chance to expand services, revenue

District adds three positions

By R.J. MARX
Seaside Signal

The Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District presented a \$3.07 mil-

lion budget to members of the district's budget committee last Tuesday. With the acquisition of the former Broadway Middle School, the district anticipates an opportunity to expand services and revenue by 27%.

See Budget, Page A6

Hernandez candidacy rests on future board policy

By R.J. MARX
Seaside Signal

The residency of Al Hernandez, a Position 1 candidate on the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District's board of directors, remains in question after the district's regular meeting last Tuesday.

He is running against Su Coddington, the incumbent who was appointed to the position last spring. Ballots have been sent out to district residents.

"In Mr. Hernandez's filing information, he indicated an address within district boundaries," said Skyler Archibald, the park district's executive director. Archibald received information in mid-April that Hernandez lived in Gearhart, outside of the park district boundaries.

"The deadline for withdrawal has come and gone," Archibald said. "After election results are tallied, the district will be asked to certify those results. If Mr. Hernandez is the leading vote-receiver for that position the district would be in the position of determining his eligibility based on his residency."

"I consider Seaside my permanent address, and I feel I am eligible to run," Hernandez said at the meeting.

If the district decided that he was not eligible to serve on the board there would be a vacancy and the board would fill the vacancy using their normal process or other processes.

What is unclear is who within the district has that authority, Archibald said.

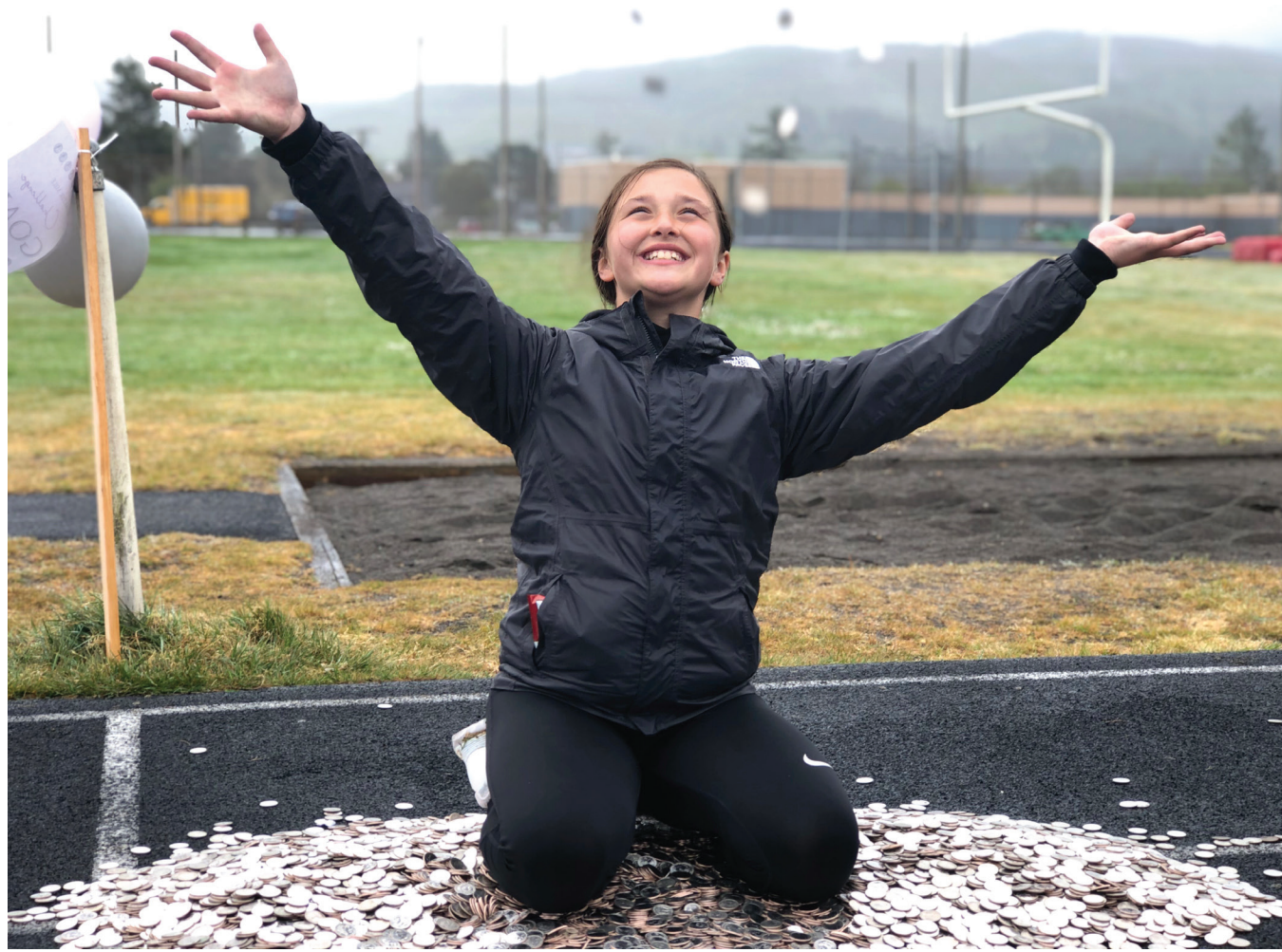
"It's the position of staff that the district board's role in this is to outline a clear and coherent policy that will guide them, should this outcome occur," he said.

Archibald recommended the board codify their process for certifying the election results and do so in a transparent manner.

In a letter to Archibald, Sheryl Holcom, an elections technician for Clatsop County, said once the park district certifies the regular district election, an abstract

See Hernandez, Page A6

A QUARTER MILE IN QUARTERS



Nicole Sturgell

Berkley Sturgell celebrates the Quarter Mile Challenge.

Gearhart playground to get big boost from fourth-grader's fundraiser

By R.J. MARX
Seaside Signal



Nicole Sturgell and her daughter, Berkley, at the old Seaside High School track.

Ten-year-old Berkley Sturgell, friends and supporters lined the old Seaside High School track with quarters last Friday. Sturgell's Quarter Mile Challenge aimed to collect enough quarters to stretch the length of one-quarter mile — by Berkley's estimate, \$4,290.

Starting Friday morning, the group carefully laid out the quarters along the dirt track.

"My daughter Berkley has raised these quarters to contribute to the city of Gearhart playground proposal," Nicole Sturgell said. "So right now we are literally lining them. Her goal is to make it one time around the track. And we'll just keep going from there."

Berkley Sturgell's efforts started in January, when she wrote a letter to the Gear-

hart City Council, imploring them to get new play equipment for local children. Mayor Paulina Cockrum picked up on the idea, proposing Centennial Park near Trail's End Art Association as the location, funded by a mix of donations and city dollars.

Through donations from the Quarter Mile Challenge, the fourth grader set a goal to collect 10% of the proposed \$50,000 playground in the city's downtown Centennial Park.

To promote the event, she created a video, flyers and added drop boxes throughout town.

"I'm hoping to go over my goal of about \$4,000," she said. "I think that it will be about \$6,000 or \$7,000."

By mid-afternoon, Nicole Sturgell reported that Berkley had reached her goal of quarters stretching a quarter mile "with a huge pile to spare." A final tally will follow.



R.J. Marx
Josh Como has been named Gearhart's interim fire chief.

Como to serve as interim Gearhart fire chief

By R.J. MARX
Seaside Signal

Josh Como has been named interim fire chief after the retirement of Gearhart Fire Chief Bill Eddy.

"Josh has been around the department since he was in kindergarten and is a second generation Gearhart firefighter," City Administrator Chad Sweet said in making the announcement. "I'm very confident in Josh's abilities. And I look forward to responding to emergency calls with him."

"I have been involved with the fire department since I was 6 years

old," Como said. "That's how old I was when my dad joined. I was a cadet when I was 14."

It was "kind of a family affair," Como said.

There was a period of time where there were four Comos on the fire department: Randy Sr., Randy Jr., Josh and younger brother, Tony. Both Randy Sr. and Tony are still in the Gearhart department, Randy Sr. as assistant chief.

Eddy started with Gearhart fire in 1983 and was named chief in 2001. He announced his retirement earlier this year.

"I've had the privilege of working alongside Chief Eddy full time since 2017," Como said. "We all

knew he was retiring within the next 10 years. So we knew that was coming eventually. But they are very huge shoes to fill."

Como is married to Trissa Como. He has four children: Tanner, Jayden, Brighton and Elianna. Among the first items ahead for the interim chief is a potential bond vote on a new firehouse.

"A new fire department would be very beneficial to us," Como said. "There's a lot of stuff that goes through in that process, planning and preparing, and so I have not yet been able to review everything. And so at the time, I'm not prepared to weigh in on it. But I know that it would be very beneficial to

the volunteers and the citizens of Gearhart in a huge way."

Is he anticipating applying for the full-time chief position?

"Yes sir," Como said. "And I was beforehand."

For now, his hope is that he doesn't disappoint the volunteers. "The volunteers are very important thing, the most important thing we have here in this department," he said. "I'm hoping that we continue to keep moving forward, that nothing falls through the cracks — we don't miss anything along the line."

