

Trash: Council considers closing center due to dumped waste

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shipped out because it's fiberglass," McDowell said. Around the corner, the recycling center on Avenue S is designed for cardboard and glass only, a message posted on recycling bins and fencing states. Nearly every night, garbage bags or refuse are left outside the gates after they close. "Someone dropped a toilet off," McDowell said. "I'm not quite sure who's going to reuse that toilet."

The City Council is considering closing the center because of the expense of disposing unwanted garbage, he said.

"I really don't want to shut the recycle center down, because the majority of people are using it for its intended purpose," McDowell said. "There's a few that are impacting a lot of people by dumping this stuff off and leaving it. It's affecting our parks budget. We only have so much money to go around. We're basically garbage men."

Homeowners should think twice before leaving items on the city's streets, even if well-intentioned.

"That's a great excuse for not having to take something up to the dump and pay for it yourself," McDowell

really need to educate our residents that that's not how you'd get rid of things."

McDowell said he will also propose a garbage day for residents to dispose of their unwanted waste. Public works also teams with

RECYCLE CENTER WOES

The topic of unwanted trash at the city's Avenue S recycle center came up at Monday's City Council when Recology's Dave Yarmouth addressed a collection rate increase.

"This evening, when I went by, there were six large jugs of fryer oil," Yarmouth said. "So it means a business or multiple businesses are instead of properly dealing with that material, they leave, they brought it and left it in the ditch outside of public works."

"We've done some looking internally about how we could better provide staff for that depot," he continued. "But there are concerns that the folks that we employ are not trained or prepared to deal with folks who have mental health challenges or other issues, and so it becomes a safety concern for us."

said. "I'm not sure if anyone understands the homeless don't need five microwaves. They don't need one microwave. They have no electrical power, right? We

the Seaside Community Cleanup, a group of volunteers working to keep the nearby Mill Ponds clean.

Residents can also bring items to recycle to the Asto-



Photos by R.J. Marx

ABOVE: Discarded items outside the city recycling area. BELOW: Illegal dumping at the center.

ria Transfer Station. Homeowners can contact Recology for special household pickups.

"You live here because you like this area," McDowell said. "Your kids grow up here. You want them to stay. I want to make sure that everything is set up for them to have a lifetime here themselves."



Firehouse: Hopeful Highlands site will attract more volunteers

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erty in 2018 for \$649,000. Even if a bond vote failed, the Highlands Lane property could be used for housing or a fire station at a later date.

"Whether voters authorize a fire station, we have a future site that they can go to, and then we have a park, that certainly would be a benefit to the city," Watts said.

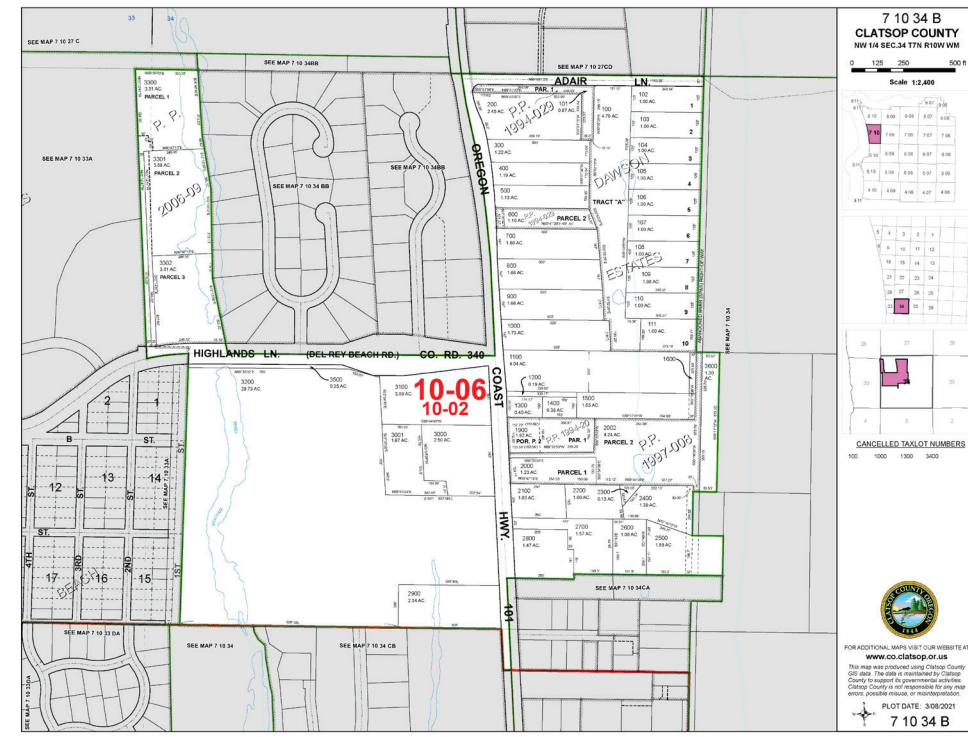
The Highlands Lane property comes with a park and potential workforce housing, which could help recruit volunteer firefighters.

"A lot of communities have had to go with full-time professionals, because it's becoming so difficult to recruit volunteers," Watts said. "So anything that we can do to make them more attractive for people to volunteer, that will be significant financial savings to the city."

The Highlands site is closer to where volunteers generally live, "and so it should hopefully be easier for them to respond," he added.

According to the timeline presented at last week's meeting, site investigation, conceptual design and the urban growth boundary land exchange are underway.

City Councillor Brent Warren said the No. 1 thing



A portion of 36 acres on Highlands Lane along U.S. Highway 101 could be used for a new firehouse and police station.

to determine was "the preliminary pulse of the people." "And that seems to be really crucial," he said.

A public survey could help the public "move forward with confidence," Cockrum added. "I, for one, think this is worth the time — whatever it takes to get the word out," she said.

Public comment would take place between June 28 and July 12, with the anticipation that the bond vote would be filed with the county in August for a November vote. The bond



The Gearhart City Council met in-person on June 8.

vote could be pushed to next spring, or November 2022, Watts said, but

the risk of waiting is that favorable bond rates could vanish.

City councilors unanimously voted to approve funds for the due diligence. The building reserve fund has \$122,000 and is anticipated to receive another \$100,000 in funds from the new city budget and from the federal coronavirus relief aid. "We believe this will be a good way to spend those funds," City Administrator Chad Sweet said. "We've done a lot of work to get this down as tight as possible without wasting any money. This will allow us to get some

good information." Watts said he is grateful for the developers to be willing to do the deal.

"They've been very easy to work with," Watts said. "Whether or not their motive is primarily profit driven, or they also want to see Gearhart thrive, they are deciding the city property and I appreciate the fact that they're willing to do that. This might be in their financial benefit. It's certainly in ours. I'm happy that this seems like it can go forward."

Rec Center: Environmental study planned

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service that would probably come in either weekly or biweekly. The park district would be responsible for cleaning shared spaces.

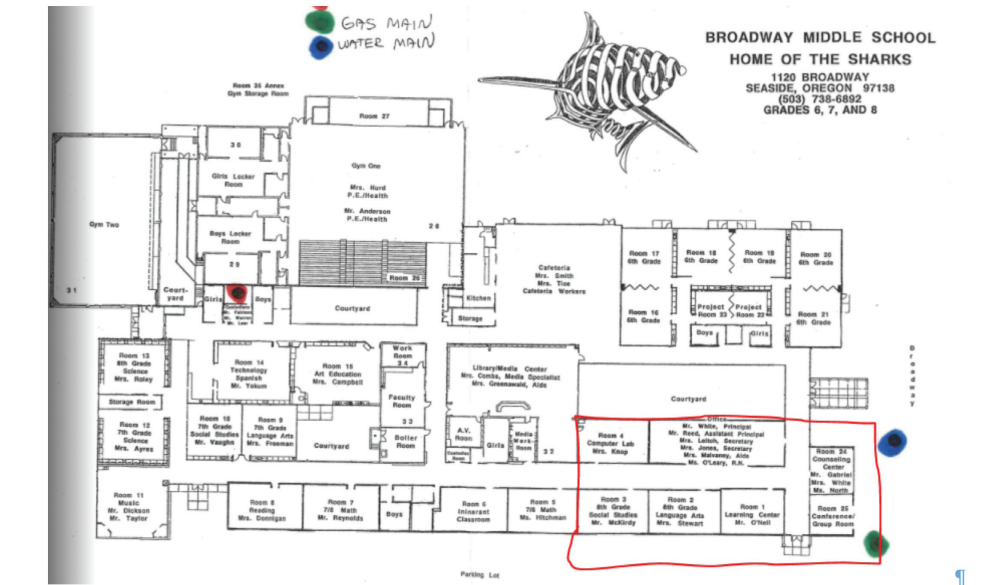
"They don't really plan on making any alterations to the space except for possibly looking at adding carpet in one or two of the rooms just to make it a little more warm and inviting," Archibald said.

The service district plans to contract out an environmental study of the space, Archibald said, looking at the possibility of mold or other environmental contaminants as well as asbestos. "They have looked at ours, and they were grateful for it, but they want to do an additional study."

That will be coordinated within the next couple of weeks, he said.

Working in both parties' favor is the service district's familiarity with the space, Archibald said.

"We couldn't find a person, an outside agency, besides the school district



Red outline indicates proposed office areas sought for lease by the Northwest Regional Education Service District at the Sunset Recreation Center.

themselves, that's probably spent more time in the space," Archibald said. "I was assured in our conversation today that they understand that the condition of the building is what it is, and that they still think it's a really great fit and a good location for them."

This could be the begin-

ning of a long-term relationship between the two special districts, board member Celeste Bodner said.

"I don't want to say probable, but I think it's reasonable to think that these folks might be involved in our long-term plans for the building after this," she said.

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