

Cannon Beach pursues food tax to help pay for emergency response

By **KATIE FRANKOWICZ**
The Astorian

CANNON BEACH — The city is moving forward with a tax on prepared food in an effort to get tourists to help pay for emergency response and infrastructure.

The City Council voted 3-2 last week in favor of proceeding with an ordinance that would levy a 5% tax on prepared food. City Councilor Nancy McCarthy made the motion, supported by Councilor Mike Benefield and Councilor Brandon Ogilvie. Mayor Sam Steidel and Councilor Robin Risley voted in opposition.

McCarthy, acknowledging a concern expressed by restaurant owners, also asked that the ordinance include a promise of financial assistance to businesses

to help them cover the cost of implementing the tax.

Steidel believes the question of a local tax should go to voters in November — something some residents have urged against, saying it would lead to even more division in the community around an already contentious issue.

The city is still considering a ballot measure.

The new tax could raise an estimated \$1.7 million a year. The revenue would be divided between the city and the Cannon Beach Rural Fire Protection District, giving each about \$863,000 per year.

A consultant the city partnered with estimated that 96% of the tax revenue would be generated from purchases by nonresidents.

Oregon is known for its lack of a statewide sales tax, but several cities have

already implemented local food and beverage taxes or, like Cannon Beach, have considered it. Yachats, farther down the coast, and Ashland, near the California border — both cities that see significant tourism — have levied food and beverage taxes for years, using the revenue collected to fund infrastructure needs.

Proponents say the tax in Cannon Beach is necessary to fund operations at the fire district. The district is fielding ever-increasing calls for service that spike during the busy summer tourist season. The city hopes to use its share of the revenue to replace an aging City Hall and police department and secure funding for future infrastructure needs.

City leaders and Fire Chief Marc Reckmann have argued a prepared food tax

is a way to spread the burden of paying for the fire district and other infrastructure fairly between visitors and residents.

The proposed tax has drawn the ire of restaurant owners who worry about negative impacts on their businesses and the cost of implementing the tax.

While they support the fire district, they say they are still reeling from a year under ever-shifting coronavirus restrictions. Some noted that they would have to invest in new point-of-sale systems in order to calculate the tax.

“The single industry that has been hurt most by this pandemic is the restaurant industry,” wrote Jim Oyala, the owner of Bill’s Tavern & Brewhouse, in a comment he sent to the city.

Hotels and shops returned to business as

usual much earlier than restaurants, which are only slowly getting back to full capacity, he said.

“This tax would be kicking a dog that is already down,” Oyala wrote.

Cindy Beckman, with Ecola Seafoods, agreed. She supports the fire district — in 2018 Ecola Seafoods would have burned to the ground if the fire district hadn’t responded — but the tax could be a burden, she said.

Restaurants operate on thin margins, she told the City Council. The labor force is limited and implementing a tax would cost the business not just hard dollars, she said, “It’s a huge bill on our time.”

She asked that the city provide some relief to businesses to help them recoup their costs if the tax is implemented.

However, others in the community say the money needs to come from somewhere and they’d prefer visitors shoulder their share of the cost. The tax is a pass-through for businesses, they said.

“I have a choice about whether I want to go out and eat and pay a prepared food tax,” resident Betsy Ayres told the City Council. “If we decided to go ahead and fund these services though an increase in property taxes, I won’t have a choice about that. I will just have to pay that.”

“We cannot afford to not do this,” she added. “Let’s get it done.”

Darryl Komesu noted that some of the businesses opposed to the tax received grants from the city last year for pandemic relief.

Now the city has a need, he said.



Task Force 18 responds to Bootleg fire

Seaside Signal

Clatsop County sent Task Force 18 to Klamath County to assist with the Bootleg fire last Thursday afternoon. The task force has members and apparatus from Seaside,

Knappa, Lewis and Clark, Warrenton, Gearhart, Cannon Beach and Nehalem fire departments.

Seaside Fire and Rescue task force leader is Mathew Keefer. The department sent a brush engine, with engine boss Katie Bulletset, fire-

fighter Dillion Rhinevault, firefighter Artem Yelfimov, riding and working on Gearhart 2972.

Division Chief David Rankin is working a member of the Blue Team of the Oregon State Fire Marshal team as a safety officer

at the Jack fire in Douglas County.

Gearhart fire sent Lt. James Paul Hutchinson, firefighter James Schneider and firefighter Amy Lair.

They join the existing local, state, and federal resources at the incident.

Task Force 18 in Seaside before they left to fight the Bootleg Fire in Klamath County.

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PUBLIC SAFETY LOG



July 3

7:01 p.m., 500 block S. Columbia: Caller reports being punched in the face by a juvenile.

7:39 p.m., N. Columbia: Caller reports a “dine ‘n dash” incident.

8:17 p.m., 1000 block S. Downing: Police assist another agency.

9:04 p.m., Turnaround: Police seize illegal fireworks on the beach.

9:48 p.m., Worldmark: Illegal fireworks.

11:11 p.m., Convention Center parking: Fireworks offense.

July 4

12:54 a.m., Carousel Mall: A disturbance is reported.

1:42 a.m., Broadway and Edgewood: Visitors to the area are assisted finding their vehicle.

6:21 a.m., 400 block S. Roosevelt: A person is arrested and charged with theft.

6:24 a.m., 1100 block Broadway: A lost dog is brought to the kennel.

July 5

12:33 a.m., Shilo Inn: Fireworks offense.

12:34 a.m., First and Columbia: A disturbance is reported.

1:09 a.m., Beach and Avenue U: 911 open line, no sounds of an emergency; on call back male refused to provide information and called dispatch “weird.”

1:29 a.m., 12th and beach: A disturbance is reported.

2:14 a.m., Turnaround: Fireworks offense.

12:52 p.m., 2400 block U.S. Highway 101: Police respond to a report of a dog locked to a fence.

3:39 p.m., 800 block 1th Avenue: A missing person is

reported.

4:10 p.m., Turnaround: Another missing person is reported.

7:00 p.m., 300 block Broadway: An intoxicated male harassing customers and staff is advised of trespass. The same male is reported harassing customers and being aggressive with staff at two more locations along the street. Police continue to advise him of trespass.

8:14 p.m., 84000 block Nordmark Drive: Police assist Clatsop County Sheriff’s Office on a disturbance call.

8:43 p.m., 200 block Avenue U: Caller reports witnessing domestic violence; police responding find an intoxicated couple; the female fell down and the male was assisting her to their room.

July 6

12:47 p.m., 1300 block 12th Avenue: A caller reported identity theft saying someone fraudulently applied for unemployment; they never worked for the stated employer.

7:20 p.m., 400 block S. Roosevelt: Caller reports an intoxicated man stumbling in a parking lot, blood on his face, dragging a dog. Police contact the man who said he fell but did not want medical attention. A sober friend showed up to escort him home.

July 7

12:58 p.m., 19th and Columbia: Caller reports eight bags of garbage left behind; police check the bags and see they are filled with wood with a note they are to be used that night.

2:35 p.m., 400 block Oceanway Street: Caller reports subject “ranting from his perch,” frightening tourists. Subject was contacted and calmed down.

10:39 p.m., 400 block S. Roosevelt: Caller reports smashing watermelons outside a business. The subject is contacted and told they’ve been trespassed from the establishment.

July 8

8:49 a.m., 400 block S.

Roosevelt: Caller reports male trespassing; on arrival both parties come to an agreement to “give it one more chance,” before pressing charges.

11:19 a.m., Movie theatre: Caller reports a distraught woman who on arrival refuses help. Officers notified another agency.

1:08 p.m., 2000 block Cedar Street: Property crimes are reported.



July 5

4:05 a.m., 700 block Fifteenth Avenue: EMS call; assist another agency.

2:50 p.m., U.S. Highway 101 and Beerman Creek Road: Car accident.

July 6

12:15 p.m., Aldermill and Avenue S: Police assist another agency on a medical call.

2:14 p.m., 84000 block Nordmark Drive: EMS call.

2:48 p.m., 900 block 16th Street: EMS call.

2:49 p.m., 1700 block S. Downing: EMS call.

4:26 p.m., Firefighters are dispatched to Douglas County to fight the Jack Creek Wildfire.

7:59 p.m., 19th and Franklin: Brush fire.

July 8

3:07 p.m., Avenue S and dunes: Fire investigation.

3:41 p.m., Firefighters are dispatched to the Klamath Falls wildfire.

Seaside Fire

June 20

7:15 a.m., Avenue G: EMS call.

12:29 p.m., Indian Beach: Water rescue.

9:29 p.m., Avenue I and the beach: Fire investigation.