

Fireworks: ‘If we saw them, we took them’

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silent fireworks or a drone display.

“It would help the people of Seaside, who are susceptible to that kind of noise, to have a more celebratory July Fourth,” she said.

Stephen Davis asked the city to enact a “no fireworks of any kind” policy, such as Cannon Beach has done. “There are already local and state regulations in place, which are not being responded to,” the resident said in a letter to city councilors.

This was the second year that the coronavirus pandemic prompted Seaside to cancel its fireworks show, which officials have said brings an estimated \$20 million economic impact. The city’s visitors bureau has regularly provided \$20,000 to \$25,000 in tourism grant dollars to fund the fireworks. The remaining cost — estimated at \$50,000 — is provided by donors.

At last week’s City Council meeting, Police Chief Dave Ham said the police department had 19 fireworks-related calls on Independence Day, although he recognized there were many more fireworks illegally discharged.

The police department received 88 total calls and 26 fireworks complaints over the holiday weekend, he said, issuing citations and seizing fireworks from several groups.

Enforcement boils down to a shortage of officers “chasing fireworks,” Ham



Along the Prom on July Fourth.

Lou Solitske

said. “I’m chasing so many other calls for service that are priority over fireworks that I don’t have enough people. To go out and enforce a kid with a sparkler when I’ve got somebody blowing off rockets that are booming bigger than our sanctioned show — I’d have a hard time writing that ticket.”

“If we saw them, we took them,” Fire Chief Joey Dan-

iels said. “It’s not easy — we can take them from one group and by the time they move, there’s another group there.”

Banning fireworks on the beach could push people elsewhere, Daniels said. “Where are they going to go? I don’t want to encourage people to try to hide from us in the woods or behind people’s houses and lighting

them on the porch or in their backyards.”

Earlier this month, residents in Gearhart also urged their city to ban fireworks, citing noise, threats to wildlife and pets and fire danger.

In Cannon Beach, which banned all fireworks last September, fines can run to \$5,000. Seaside’s fines are about \$700, Ham said.

Seaside and Cannon

Beach are different communities and bring different issues, the police chief said. “It’s taken a few years for them to really get it going to where they’re citing everybody that they come across and spreading that word that it’s not welcome here. Everything’s outlawed.”

Banning fireworks on the beach also relies on the Oregon Parks and Recreation

Department and the state fire marshal’s office, Daniels said.

Fireworks are not allowed at any time in national parks and forests, on Bureau of Land Management lands, on U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service properties, on all Oregon Department of Forestry protected lands, on state beaches, or in state parks and campgrounds.

According to the state Office of Emergency Management, while the state fire marshal does not have the authority to ban fireworks, the agency’s “Keep it legal. Keep it safe” campaign supports the use and safety of legal fireworks — ones that don’t fly or explode.

Legal fireworks are sold in Seaside once a year, before the July Fourth holiday. Those sales are giving people “a double message,” City Councilor Tita Montero said.

Seeing fireworks for sale, visitors may assume they are legal on the beach.

The idea of drones and lasers may be very expensive as an upfront cost, but over time it is less expensive than \$40,000 a year on fireworks, Montero said. “Also it’s much more ecological, it’s an opportunity for us to have multiple occasions of light shows in our sky,” she said.

She asked city councilors to form a committee to look into a ban on fireworks and fireworks sales.

A laser or drone display could give Seaside an opportunity “to do the right thing for the right reasons,” Montero said.

Rec center: ‘It’s meant to really lay the groundwork and set the foundation’

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the final report.

The park district purchased the former Broadway Middle School for \$2.15 million in January. The school, along with Gearhart Elementary and Seaside High School, was among Seaside School District properties relocated to the new Spruce Drive location outside of the tsunami inundation zone.

Since the purchase, the park district has hosted the Pacific Basketball League, child care programs and leased a portion of the space to the Northwest Regional Education Service District, which moves in in early August.

“In a design sense, the flexibility component is more critical than trying to define what could happen in the space,” Cannon Beach Mayor Sam Steidel said.

Although Cannon Beach residents are not members of the park district, many use the Sunset Pool, and he envisioned future partner-



R.J. Marx

Suzy Fisher Reeder and Evan Eleff of Sports Facilities Advisory leads a session with community leaders at the Sunset Recreation Center. Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District Executive Director Skyler Archibald at right.

ship opportunities.

He asked the planners to “leave themselves as open as possible” to potential building uses using a phased approach to determining community needs.

In talking to community stakeholders, Monica Steele, the assistant Clatsop County manager, said “the topic that

comes up every time is child care.”

Steele asked the advisory group to consider the building for child care or a “place to get them out of the house,” particularly at the age where children are vulnerable to depression and self-harm.

Eleff said child care was

a likely phase one goal. “It would be shocking to me if we don’t come back with that as a key component,” he said. “It’s a primary need. And it’s probably the fastest way to use this building effectively.”

The recreation center’s future is “exactly our mission” of improving the



Evan Eleff of Sports Facilities Advisory leads a session with community leaders at the Sunset Recreation Center.

health and economic vitality of communities through sports, recreation and wellness, he said.

“We want to understand first what you want to do, and what the opportunity is,” Eleff said. “Second, how that can and should work from an operational perspec-

tive on the financial feasibility of covering the cost of operating and whatever else there needs to be.

“It’s meant to really lay the groundwork and set the foundation,” he added. “We don’t want to produce a study — we want to produce a path forward.”



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