

Homeless: The urgency is growing with the change of seasons

Continued from Page A1

or discouraged at how big the problem is. “Then it evolves into business as usual,” Moffett said. “And everybody’s busy, so that’s an easy place to go.”

“We can talk this to death,” City Councilor Tita Montero said. “It’s so overwhelming that it can just batter us down. We’ve done a lot of good work here. We are ready, we want to jump, but we can’t jump because we either don’t know which way to jump or we don’t have the resources to do that.”

Seaside’s push to address homelessness grew amid reports of people living in cars, the streets and in the woods.

Oregon state House Bill 2006 requires local governments to approve applications for emergency shelter, regardless of any land use laws. House Bill 3115 aims to protect unsheltered Oregonians from fines or arrest for sleeping or camping on public property when there are no other options. Seaside has until mid-2023 to comply.

The topic was among the top identified issues at a City Council goal-setting meet-



Homeless often sleep overnight or store belongings in the city parking lot next to the Seaside Civic and Convention Center.

ing in January. A warming center, shelters and a homeless liaison for Clatsop County were identified as major needs for Seaside. The county hired two homeless liaisons in the spring, but options for the homeless off Seaside’s streets haven’t materialized.

For Public Works Director McDowell, the problem

transcends income levels. “We have a huge problem in Seaside, and housing, period,” McDowell said. “Our workforce can’t find housing. It’s not affordable. Businesses are struggling with shortened hours, which decreases revenue. We’re a city 3 miles long, 1 mile wide at best. And we have no housing here that’s

affordable for anyone. We don’t have available land to build the housing because most of the land that is left is a wetland or floodway.”

The urgency is growing with the change of seasons, Mayor Jay Barber said. “One of the high priorities is a warming center/navigation center centrally located somewhere here in



Mayor Jay Barber and Ariel Nelson of the League of Oregon Cities at a Seaside homeless forum at the convention center.

Seaside,” he said.

Montero urged collaboration with other governmental entities, especially in siting locations to address the need. “While the city may not have property for transitional or permanent housing, land may be available elsewhere in the county,” she said. “We have to have a local mentality but we also need a county mentality.”

A City Council workshop will take place Nov. 8 prior to the regular council meeting, at which time councilors could adopt a set

of initiatives.

Barber hopes to focus on “low-hanging fruit.”

“My hope would be that the group focuses on three or four initiatives so that we begin to see some tangible work being done,” he said. “We’ve talked in general about some of these, like a warming center. We’ve talked about the tiny house developments, we’ve talked about finding a campus or RV park — to really begin to focus on tangible solution projects that we can begin to work on.”

School: No projects expected on the property before December 2023



Former Gearhart Elementary School, after exterior, landscape work and repaving.

Continued from Page A1

Prior to the August Planning Commission meeting, Scofi Gearhart LLC withdrew its conditional use permit application after owners disputed comments presented in a staff report prior to this month’s Planning Commission meeting, including the need for a property zone change to add the proposed caretaker apartments in the building, now known as the Gearhart Recreation Center.

The original school building was constructed in 1948 and added on to in 1968. The

Moreys purchased the 8.5-acre property in 2020. The school is zoned public/semi-public, with outright uses as government facility, public meeting space or school.

If owners elect to include housing in their final plan, they envision it being single-story, one- and two-bedroom long-term rental cottages that will be designed to be in keeping with the character of Gearhart.

Water test sites will be monitored from November through April. Feedback from the DEQ could come possibly as early as the end of June, Morey said. “Until

we have that feedback from the DEQ. We really can’t do anything else in terms of any planning on what we can do on the site.

At last week’s City Council meeting, Gearhart City Councilor Brent Warren said the school looks “a whole lot better now than it did when he bought it. It’s a huge improvement for the community.”

Morey doesn’t expect any projects on the property before December 2023. “That would be my time,” he said. “You’ve to get the background before you do anything.”



If not for you, for them.

Get vaxxed.

80% of COVID-19 infections occur in unvaccinated people. Which means, if you’re not vaccinated, you’re helping the pandemic continue. Fortunately, the vaccines are safe, free and highly effective at keeping you from catching and spreading COVID. Please protect yourself, the people you love and our community. Get vaxxed today.

colpachealth.org/vax


Columbia Pacific CCO™
Part of the CareOregon Family