

# Gearhart seeks post office independence

**SEEN FROM SEASIDE**

R.J. MARX



Confusion between addresses in Seaside and Gearhart is driving an attempt to bring a new ZIP code to Gearhart. Gearhart residents hope to persuade the U.S. Postal Service to issue a new ZIP code to the city in order to prevent delivery mix-ups and delays.

“If I’m ordering online and I give my ZIP code and I say Gearhart, and they, on the other end of the line they say ‘No, it’s Seaside,’ and you have to explain the whole thing,” councilor Reita Fackerell said.

Gearhart postal clerk Karynn Kozij described the current situation as “massive confusion.”

“Companies send out text messages saying their packages are being held at 97138,” Kozij said. “A lot of my customers who are new to the area, not knowing that I have their package here at Gearhart, go to Seaside by mistake.”

Not only homeowners, but businesses that rely on property addresses could benefit from the change, including real estate agents and first responders.

Councilor Brent Warren, a proponent of the change, said numbered streets and lettered streets — in Gearhart, they are streets, in Seaside, they are avenues — are especially troublesome.

“It creates delays in the mail,” Warren said. “And obviously, when things are misdirected, they have to be fixed and researched, so that’s problematic.”

Gearhart will present a resolution to U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici and regional postal officials seeking a new ZIP code and independent Gearhart post office.

Gearhart became a contract station of Seaside in 1961, when the post office department struggled with outdated equipment, crowded facilities, underpaid workers, and an ineffective management structure. The decision saved the post office about \$1,700 a year.

The Gearhart Post Office moved in 1995 from a space in the Pacific Way Cafe to



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**Gearhart Post Office.**

its location at 546 Pacific Way. In 2003, the city attempted to address the ZIP code issue with a request to a coordinator for the regional district.

Many coastal communities with populations considerably smaller than Gearhart have been assigned their own unique ZIP codes, staff wrote in the draft resolution presented to the City Council at the October meeting.

“The city of Gearhart requests the United States Postal Service to assign ZIP code 97139 or another unique ZIP code to our city,” they wrote.

It is possible to request a ZIP code boundary review by writing to the district manager for the region, Bonamici’s district representative, Ali Mayeda, wrote Warren.

“The boundary review process requires any municipality and community group seeking a ZIP code change to submit the request in writing to the manager of the district, with any rationale and justification. This request can only be made once every 10 years.”

Mayeda asked the city to prepare and send a request to the congresswoman’s office. The district manager must provide a determination within 60 days, and the postal service conducts a formal survey of customers who would be affected.

If a simple majority of respondents support the change, the postal service usually grants an approval, she said.

“I can’t see the downside to this, so I would ask that we adopt the resolution and get going on it,” Warren said.



**The first Gearhart post office, in an undated photo, believed to have been located on Third Street.**

**NEWS IN BRIEF**

**Gearhart author featured in Le Guin tribute anthology**

Author Jason Arias has a short story included in “Dispatches from Anarres: Tales in Tribute to Ursula K. Le Guin,” edited by Susan DeFreitas. The release date is Nov. 16, from Forest Avenue Press. Arias is a Gearhart resident.

Named for the anarchist utopia in Ursula K. Le Guin’s classic “The Dispossessed,” “Dispatches from Anarres” embodies the anarchic spirit of Portland, Le Guin’s hometown, while paying tribute to her enduring vision.

Arias’ newest short story “Joy-Be’s Last Dance” will be included in Forest Avenue Press’ newest anthology “Dispatches from Anarres: Tales in Tribute to Ursula K. Le Guin.”

Arias’ debut short story collection, “Momentary Illumination of Objects In Motion,” was published in 2018 by Black Bomb Books. His stories and essays have appeared in The Nashville Review, Oregon Humanities Magazine, Harpur Palate, Lidia Yuknavitch’s TED Book: The Misfit’s Manifesto, as well as multiple magazines and anthologies. For links to more of his work visit [jasonariasauthor.com](http://jasonariasauthor.com).

Arias will be part of the panel at the Portland Book Festival, Nov. 13, alongside fellow contributing authors Rene Denfeld, Juhea Kim, Jessie Kwak and moderator Arwen Spicer.

“Dispatches from Anarres” will be

available at independent bookstores across the country on Nov. 16.

**‘Backyard birds’**

Sou’Wester Garden Club meets Wednesday, Oct. 27, from 10 a.m. to noon at the Bob Chisholm Center, 1225 Avenue A in Seaside. The program, “Backyard Birds,” is presented by Barb Linnette.

**SMART Reading teams up with local Realtors**

Children’s literacy nonprofit SMART Reading has received a \$2,500 grant from the Windermere Foundation to continue providing critical reading support to children in Clatsop and Columbia counties. Windermere Coast offices are a member of the Clatsop Association of Realtors.

For three decades, SMART Reading has paired community volunteers with pre-k through third-grade students for in-person, one-on-one reading sessions. The organization also provides students with new books to keep.

Given the ongoing health precautions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, SMART Reading has focused on continuing to get books to students — distributing over 2,364 books to students during the 2020-21 school year — and has new virtual models for providing reading support for its students.

SMART Reading serves 200 students at Pacific Ridge, Warrenton, Astor and Clatskanie elementary schools. Each student will pick out 14 new books to keep and share with their family.



Jason Arias



**Pam Ackley of Windermere presents a check to Jeanne Moha for the SMART Reading program.**

**LETTER TO THE EDITOR**

**Deep gratitude to the Gearhart Volunteer Fire Department**

I would like to express my deep gratitude for the Gearhart Volunteer Fire Department.

On Oct. 8, my wife and I experienced one of the most traumatic nights of our lives. After a relaxing evening with an early season fire in our fireplace and while lying in bed, we heard what we thought was the magnet on the dog door popping back and forth. I have tried to sleep through Maggie’s antics before. She is a very mischievous terrier. After several minutes of negotiation with my wife, Lisa takes the high road and decides to stop Maggie from making noise with the dog door. However, when Lisa turns on the bedroom light, both our dogs are quietly sleeping on their beds.

Well, there must be a raccoon trying to get in the house so I jump out of bed, but really Maggie should be on this first. Just at this moment Lisa screams the house is on fire. At the time, I’m still not so sure she’s right. That popping noise does sound like a large bonfire but, there is no indication of any smoke in the house. I run outside and see a small flame around the base of the chimney on the front of the house.

After putting the dogs in my truck, I immediately get the garden house full blast at the flames. Lisa calls 911. It was 11:04 p.m. Only seconds after calling 911, flames jump 25 feet into the air from the very back of the house, just above our upstairs bedroom. Our fire chief, Josh Como, was on scene in only eight minutes, and the engine was just behind. I know that the incredibly quick response time of our Gearhart Volunteer Fire Department and the quick assistance of the other local volunteer fire departments not only saved most of our house but our neighbors house as well. The fire was very close to their cedar roof and embers were everywhere. This was an intense fire.

I never imagined that as I watched our house burning the volunteers inside were not

only fighting the fire, they were also trying to save as many of our personal items as possible. Think about this. There is a volunteer firefighter in the house taking pictures off the wall as other battle the flames.

At one point, a firefighter came over and asked if there was anything of particular sentimental value he could try and recover.

My first thought was this guy looks a lot like our city manager. Lisa, obviously distraught, tells the firefighter that her late father’s pictures are in the room below where the fire started.

I am thinking those are gone with most of our other belongings. When I saw that firefighter come out of the house with Lisa’s father’s memorabilia, that was an impactful moment for me. That was the moment I knew things had turned in the positive direction. That firefighter is our city manager Chad Sweet.

As I reflect on this particular moment, I recognize that Chad and Josh’s actions are qualities that represent the true kind of leadership we have in our city leaders. Not only can they manage a quickly developing crisis, but they also recognize the necessary moment to comfort those in need. We are truly lucky to live in a community with this kind of leadership.

To the men and women of our local volunteer fire departments. I am so impressed by you. You are an incredible asset to this community. We must ensure that the volunteer Gearhart Fire Department has the resources to continue to serve our community. I have watched the firehouse debate from the sideline in silent support for too long. A new fire station is overdue. Some things are just worth paying for. You may not know it until you are standing outside your home in the middle of the night holding a garden hose against an inferno and hoping anyone will come to help you as quickly as possible.

**Dave and Lisa Koller Gearhart**

**PUBLIC MEETINGS**

**Contact local agencies for latest meeting information and attendance guidelines.**

**MONDAY, OCT. 25**

**Seaside City Council, 7 p.m., cityofseaside.us.**

**TUESDAY, OCT. 26**

**Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District, 5:15 p.m., Bob Chisholm Community Center.**

**TUESDAY, NOV. 2**  
**Seaside Community Center Commission, 10 a.m., 1225 Avenue A.**

**Seaside Library Board of Directors, 4:30 p.m., 1131 Broadway St.**

**Seaside Planning Commission, 6 p.m., 989 Broadway.**  
**WEDNESDAY, NOV. 3**  
**Seaside Improvement Com-**

**mission, 6 p.m., 989 Broadway.**  
**Gearhart City Council, 7 p.m., cityofgearhart.com.**

**THURSDAY, NOV. 4**  
**Seaside Parks Advisory Committee, 6 p.m., 989 Broadway.**

**MONDAY, NOV. 8**  
**Seaside City Council, workshop on homelessness, 6 p.m.; regular meeting, 7 p.m., cityofseaside.us.**

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**CIRCULATION MANAGER:** Shannon Arlnt  
**ADVERTISING SALES MANAGER:** Sarah Silver-Tecza  
**PRODUCTION MANAGER:** John D. Bruijn  
**SYSTEMS MANAGER:** Carl Earl  
**CONTRIBUTING WRITERS:** Skyler Archibald, Joshua Heineman, Katherine Lacaze, Esther Moberg  
**CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER:** Jeff TerHar

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