



R.J. Marx

The post office in Gearhart.

ZIP code: ‘We need to figure out how this is going to work’

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Since the 1960s, Gearhart mail has been routed through the Seaside Post Office to the Gearhart Post Office. Because they share the same ZIP code, mail addressed to Fourth Street in Gearhart may end up at Fourth Avenue in Seaside, and vice versa, Gearhart Post Office manager Karynn Kozij said.

Misdirected mail requires costly research, redirection and delays. Many online sites utilize the Postal Service’s national ZIP code database and do not allow overriding the default city name based on the ZIP code.

A unique ZIP code would make it easier for the post office to distribute and deliver packages and easier for the customer to locate the package, Kozij said.

Eric Anderson, a Third Street resident, said he often uses his home address for sending and receiving items.

“Due to our shared ZIP code with Seaside, my deliveries are often compromised,” he said in a letter to the City Council. “I have had items shown as delivered but never received. My counterparts at Seaside’s Third Avenue are often the first and/or only stop for such items.”

FedEx driver Chris Thode, a former postal service employee in Seaside, said in correspondence there are times when numbers can get mixed up because of the confusion between addresses.

“Most of the drivers that I know can differentiate and know where to deliver, but there are times that the address is not right or the driver is new on the job,” Thode said. “It’s just common sense.”

In October, with approval from the City Council, city staff prepared a resolution on a formal request for the new ZIP code.

But confusion over num-

bered and lettered streets doesn’t impact the majority of the city’s postal customers, Jesse said. Because one group believes a new ZIP code is needed doesn’t mean the majority of residents agree.

“We have a great divide between the core community and what I believe at this point is the largest voting majority of Gearhart residents, which are not associated with the core groups whatsoever,” Jesse said. “I’m up and down the highway multiple times a day. That’s the Gearhart I know.”

“There are people here that actually refer to people like myself as ‘those people,’ like we’re the plague, the ‘scourge’ of Gearhart, because we’re not part of the downtown core — we’re on the other side. I’m sorry, I get my dander rattled by things like this because the representation is not here for

what I do believe is the largest majority of people in the city of Gearhart.”

Jesse asked for a delay on a council vote until more information was collected. “We need to figure out how this is going to work,” he said. “If we don’t know the answer to that, we should not be voting on this tonight.”

Cockrum suggested the city conduct more due diligence and make contact with the Postal Service, “maybe up the chain a little bit.”

“Maybe we can make a call and talk to somebody and find out what some possible solutions might be before we move forward,” she said.

There is one other possible concern, Kozij added. “This case is actually beyond Gearhart needing a unique ZIP code,” she said. “It’s that some Seaside customers would want Gearhart to not share theirs.”

Safe rides: Opportunities to promote education, school transportation alternatives

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As the move was solidified and construction began, McDowell applied for a grant from the state Department of Transportation’s Safe Routes to School program to financially help with the audit, planning assistance and future implementation of projects to improve children’s access to school.

The first step is taking stock of the current options and infrastructure within a 1-mile radius of the school campus and identifying where there are issues, such as sidewalks ending abruptly, lack of sidewalks, or inadequate lighting, to name a few. The area in question involves neighborhoods such as Sunset Hills, Whispering Pines, Lea Way, Spruce Drive and parts of Wahanna Road and Broadway, where the Sunset Recreation Center and Seaside Public Library are located.

From there, McDowell said, they can start developing a Safe Routes to School plan with solutions that make it easier and safer for kids to walk and bike to school. The plan also will outline opportunities for education and engagement to promote these transportation alternatives. At the same time,

they will work on ways to bring crosswalks and other infrastructure up to current Americans with Disabilities Act regulations.

The city has already tackled a few projects, such as creating a crosswalk on Spruce Drive and restriping the road at the intersection with Wahanna Road to add a turn lane.

A community effort

To create the most proactive and feasible plan possible, McDowell is seeking to involve as many community partners as possible. That includes representatives from the Sunset Empire Transportation District, Providence Seaside Hospi-

tal and Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District.

“We all need to talk to each other, we all need to get together, we all need to come up with solutions, and we will figure this out,” he said.

At the same time, they need to consider how the school campus might change over the next 10 years, which could see the bus barn being moved to the hill or construction of other new facilities.

“We’re trying to get everybody in sync, because over the next 10 years, there are going to be other changes and other additions up here that will create some traffic,” McDowell said. “Let’s at least bring them to the forefront now.”

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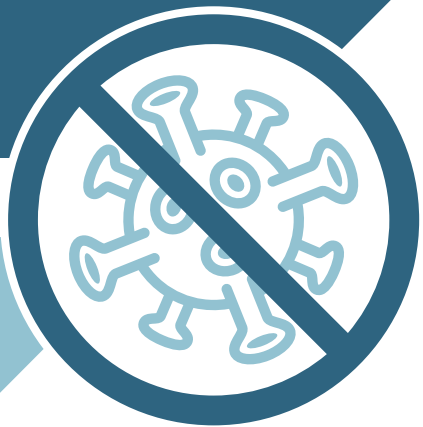
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