

Overnight parking at recreation center lot concerns board

By R.J. MARX
Seaside Signal

As a city-owned lot on Necanicum Avenue becomes the overnight resting place for more than a dozen encampments, a parking situation is brewing across the highway at the Sunset Recreation Center Parking lot.

Michael Hinton, a member of the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District Board of Directors, said he is concerned that if the city starts closing down the car park at 10th and Necanicum, the Sunset Recreation Center will turn into a “car camp.”

“It is already turning into one,” Hinton said. “We’ve got RVs which I’ve tracked and they’re showing up camping out there, several days, week after week, and I don’t want to see any of that migrate any further than it is to the SRC. I’d like to gain some understanding of why the property is being used for this free parking for dry camping and people just hanging out, particularly with vehicles.”

The concern comes weeks after Ken Heman, visitors information specialist at the Seaside Visitors Bureau, described conditions at the public restrooms adjacent to the parking lot and visitors bureau.

Heman said it started out with five or six people sleeping outside to the point where vehicles are taking spots at the visitors center, opening up their doors and occu-

PERMIT PROCESS

Seaside Visitors Bureau Director of Tourism and Marketing Joshua Heineman said the visitors bureau has a long-standing policy to issue overnight parking permits to both RVs and automobiles for the lot that is now owned by the Sunset Recreation Center. This permitted parking is intended to be a remedy whereby the permit holders have lodging that cannot accommodate large vehicles like RVs or extra vehicles.

Visitors bureau staff gather name, phone, vehicle make, model and color, license plate state and number. Vehicle owners read and sign the following declaration:

“Vehicle owner or driver hereby acknowledges that city of Seaside assumes no liability for theft or damages to vehicles parked on premises. Owner or driver also acknowledges that they will not sleep in vehicle. Violators are subject to citation for unlawful lodging, if they are found to be sleeping in vehicle.”

pying those spaces all day long, in some cases, selling or using drugs.

“I think our staff recognizes that it is a challenging area, one that we haven’t necessarily had to deal with before acquiring this property,” Skyler Archibald,

executive director of the park district, said at last Tuesday’s board meeting.

People who park in the Sunset Recreation Center lot must acquire a permit from the city, available at the visitors bureau, Archibald said. Typically, that’s for visitors staying in a hotel or staying in a vacation property without a space space for an RV, he added. There is no charge for the permit.

If vehicles park without a permit, the park district has legal grounds to ask them to move, he said.

Typically in the past, permitting has gone through the visitors bureau. “When we took ownership of the property, we asked them to continue that,” Archibald said. “We didn’t feel like we were as equipped and people know to go to the visitors or the Chamber of Commerce building to acquire their permit for that thing. Now they’re not supposed to be sleeping in their vehicles.”

Hinton said he wondered how the situation is going to progress.

“It’s pretty clear that the visitorship to the city is diminished because of the transient problem,” he said.

Celeste Bodner, the park district board’s vice president, said it was easier for the park district to firm up boundaries and policies than it is to be lax and recover later. “I agree with Mike,” Bodner said. “We could save ourselves a much larger headache by some proactive measures.”

Parking lot at the Sunset Recreation Center.

R.J. Marx



Car park: ‘We need to stop ignoring what is going on’

Continued from Page A1

Police ticketed the cars along the roadside, and, over the summer, many vehicles migrated across the street to a city-owned lot near Goodman Park.

Petition

In October, neighbors presented a petition protesting the encampment and seeking its shutdown. They returned to the City Council last Monday with additional signatures.

“We now have a total of over 107 residents that have signed the petition to move or relocate the homeless camp that’s on Necanicum between 12th and 10th avenues,” Roxanne Veazey said. “We’re wondering if we really indeed want Seaside to become a model community for the homeless?”

“Did we have a vote on this?” Veazey asked. “Is it compassionate to encourage the homeless camp where there is no electricity for heat? No lighting, no running water. Where does someone go to use the restroom? And no waste bins for trash?”

Local businesses depend on tourism, Veazey continued. “Visitors do not need to be confronted with homeless people lingering in our town.”

Neighbor Colleen Gould Gascoigne said she did not see an end date in sight. “Nothing. ... I’d appreciate some kind of acknowledgement for the locals so that we all know how long this is supposed to infringe on our lives.”



R.J. Marx

The city hopes to relocate the RV and car parking along Necanicum between 10th and 11th. For many neighbors, it should have never been allowed in the first place.

‘Limits of existing law’

Mayor Jay Barber said the city is working on options and alternatives. “We feel your pain,” Barber said. He said that he too is affected by homeless issues at his home in south Seaside.

In his letter to the Veazeys, Van Thiel said the city was cognizant of the concerns of the neighbors in the area of 10th and 11th Avenue in Necanicum in the city.

“The city is attempting to do whatever it can to resolve this matter but it must do so within the limits of existing law,” Van Thiel wrote. “The property to which you make reference is public property. The courts have ruled that people that fall into this homeless category may camp and stay overnight basically to sleep on public property. If these individuals are in violation of any other law, then they can be cited

appropriately by the city.”

City Councilor Tita Montero, who hosted a series of think tanks on homelessness this year, said the city needs to take responsibility for what happens on that property. “Whether we like it or not, it belongs to us. And we need to assert our authority on that property. We need to put up a sign with rules on it.”

She said those living in the encampment will make sure those rules are followed. “There’s a lot of things that we can do, but we need to take over responsibility.” She commended the work of Paul Knoch, a Seaside police community service officer, who has been administering safety and sanitation measures.

While the city insists the encampment isn’t permanent, fencing or screening could mitigate some of the effects for neighbors.

Some of the noise at night

comes from local residents seeking to disturb those in the encampment.

“For the last week or so, cars have been pulling into the middle of the lot and in the middle of the night when there’s no lights on,” Montero said. “That is unsafe. We know that there are residents who have been doing figure eights and running past there at high speeds with their horns on because they don’t like what’s going on. So they think, ‘Well, I’m bothering the people who are in these motorhomes.’ They don’t think about how they’re bothering the rest of the neighborhood.”

Montero said the city needs to find a place that “fits the law” so that those in the encampments can have accessible land in Seaside.

“We have our challenges,” Montero said. “But while we’re facing them, we need to stop ignoring what is going on.”

Homeless: Park district to provide showers, meals

Continued from Page A1

“It’s hard to know this time of year exactly how many there are because of the transient nature of that lifestyle, unfortunately, so I know that the need will likely exceed what we have available,” he said.

The warming center, which will open in winter months during inclement weather, is fully funded for at least one year. An overnight staff member will be assisted by one or two volunteers to oversee the shelter. Men will be separated from women and children.

The park district will work with the shelter to provide vouchers for shower access. The passes will enable free showers at the Sunset Pool 13 hours a week — 5:45 to 8 a.m. Mondays and Wednesdays and Tuesdays and Thursdays from 5 to 6 p.m. “We try to set those times where the pool isn’t used as heavily and there’s not a lot of children around,” he said.

Shower vouchers can be redeemed at any time.

“We do have some protocols in place for some of

the potential challenges that might accompany them as far as their personal belongings or pets,” he said. “I feel really confident in the abilities of staff to interact with that group.”

While a shower program is already in place, Archibald anticipates it will get more use than it has in the past.

Along with the shower program, the park district will work with the other partners to provide a sack lunch or dinner for when people check in. “We’ll be working with our foundation and possibly with our nutrition coordinator to figure out exactly how to do that,” he said.

“Unfortunately, this (homelessness) isn’t a problem that we can solve, but I think providing a hot shower and a towel is something that really will help their health,” Archibald said. “There’s probably going to be some challenging experiences to be had. But with proper training and good protocols in place we’re going to try and embrace and help those folks as much as we can.”

City manager: Winstanley was named city manager in 2001

Continued from Page A1

Seaside’s new city manager effective July 1, 2022,” Barber said. “It is the responsibility of the City Council to finalize this search, identify the final candidate and to take the steps to enter into a hiring agreement.”

According to the city’s website, the responsibilities of the city manager includes professional leadership, recommendations of solutions to community problems for council consideration, budgeting and goals, among other duties.

Winstanley started with Seaside as finance director in September 1985 and was named city manager in November 2001.

Over the years his job has encompassed the role of budget officer, human resources manager and staff liaison to the City Council.

His current salary is \$130,620.

Following the review and consideration of any internal applications, the council will decide whether to expand the search. If the council implements a

regional or national search, they would retain the services of a professional search firm.

City Councilor Tita Montero urged hiring a search firm early in the process.

“What I would like to see is that we retain the services of that professional search firm now to guide us through the whole process,” Montero said. “They’ve already got the experience that we don’t have to learn. And also it puts us at arm’s length so that there’s a neutral party that is organizing this.”

Steps ahead include a formal job announcement and application process, an updated job description, compensation ranges and deadlines for application and hiring.

“This will again be on our agenda come the first of January,” Barber said. “The process will get started. We’ll be presenting the job announcement draft, the job description draft, the application process draft. All of this has to be approved by the council. And so we’ll be keeping you apprised as we move forward.”

NEWS IN BRIEF

New Year’s Eve party at the American Legion

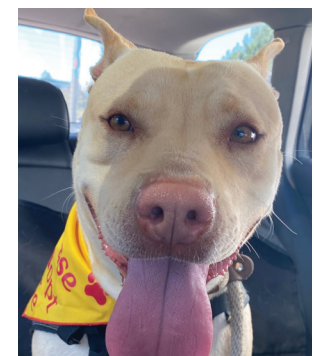
The American Legion hosts dinner and music on New Year’s Eve. Seaside’s Bruce Thomas Smith brings “Transplant Rock” and cool blues to welcome in 2022. Music starts at 9 p.m.

There is no door charge; champagne and party favors are available for \$5.

Prime rib or salmon dinner will be served from 5 to 8 p.m., \$35 with advance tickets and \$40 at the door. Dinner guests will be provided with a stamp that entitles them to free party favors and a champagne toast at midnight.

The event is open to the public 21 and older.

The Legion is located at 1315 Broadway; 503-738-5111.



Shasta is looking for a good home. For more information, contact Clatsop Animal Assistance.

Happy Tails fundraiser set

The Clatsop Animal Assistance 2021 annual virtual fundraiser, Happy Tails Holiday Fundraiser, runs through New Year’s Day.

Log in directly at www.dogsncats.org or text CAANOW to 44-321.

Clatsop Animal Assistance provides help and hope for the homeless dogs and cats in Clatsop County and covers veterinary costs for the shelter animals, from wellness checkups for kittens to major surgeries and follow-up care.



Bruce Thomas Smith