

Bond vote: Firehouse project called ‘a multigenerational investment’

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assessed at \$300,000, the estimated property tax increase would be \$364 per year; at \$500,000, just over \$600 per year.

The Gearhart Volunteer Fire Department provides fire protection and emergency medical services to nearly 28 square miles, the city wrote in a staff report. The station at 670 Pacific Way, built in 1958 and added onto in 1966, is concrete block construction. The building has one toilet and lacks showers, hanging areas and storage space.

At an elevation of 27 feet, the Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries has provided estimates that the building will be inundated in all but a small- or medium-sized tsunami.

If the May vote is approved, the bond would be used for capital construction costs to construct, equip and furnish the estimated 13,000-square-foot station, compliant with seismic and safety standards.

Jonas Biery, an investment banker with D.A. Davidson & Co., manages the financing team.

BOUNDARY SWAP ALSO REMAINS

The bond vote comes after a multiyear process, including recommendations from a firehouse committee, public surveys on preferred sites and open houses. Last September, the city made a contingent land transfer agreement with the property owner and developer, The Cottages at Gearhart LLC, to bring 34 acres into the city’s urban growth boundary.

The city must receive approval from the Department of Land Conservation and Development to bring the site into the city’s urban growth boundary. As terms of the agreement, two lots part of the parcel — a 2.14-acre lot for the fire station and 2.4-acre lot for park property — would be transferred to the city. Developers of The Cottages at Gearhart LLC, would benefit from rezoning at a higher residential density.

The city must exchange the same amount of similarly zoned land. The city has more than 70 acres west of the state’s no-build line that are inside the city’s urban growth boundary and zoned residential. There are two areas available for the swap including about 50 acres of oceanfront land with setback rules prohibiting development. The idea would be to carve off a 34-acre piece to make up for the 34 acres in the north for the firehouse.

Budgeted last fall at \$13 million, this year’s \$14.5 million bond figure allows for costs that come along with the “financial fitting” of the 20-year bond, Biery said.

“We know rates are going to change,” he said. “The one thing I can guarantee you for you today is that they won’t be exactly what

they are at this point in time. So we typically want to err on the side of caution.”

The city will pursue any outside funding that comes available, according to the bond proposal. In the current market, the project is anticipated to generate a bond premium, lowering the total bond par amount and total



City of Gearhart

Gearhart fire station at the time of its completion in 1958.

debt service.

While inflation and cost of waiting did increase the bond from what was proposed last fall, Biery said it is “a very, very, very favorable” time to borrow.

“We’re back to kind of where we were maybe two years ago when rates were still really low,” Biery said. “It’s really great that we happen to get the refinancing of the city done at just about the perfect time.”

Federal grants may be available for the project, City Attorney Peter Watts added, because the difference in elevation between the current fire station and the new site meets tsunami resiliency criteria recognized by the

federal government.

“We’re going to do our best in order to spend as little as possible,” Watts said. “But we also need to make sure that there’s sufficient funds in the event that we don’t get those things.”

Councilor Brent Warren asked if consultants would classify the project as “being oversized, unneeded or opulent.”

Larry Banks of PIVOT Architecture said he was aware that some public projects can be viewed “as kind of Taj Mahal or excessive.”

“In our experience, you have really essential functions here to provide the service and the training that you need to have, and the abil-

ity to endure for another 50 years,” Banks said. “This is a multigenerational investment that you are making in your public safety. I would add that we also are building a facility that will be of incredible utility when you do experience a tsunami incident and its associated seismic activity. It’s a facility that will serve the community well if that horrible happenstance does occur.”

Mayor Paulina Cockrum, and councilors Warren, Reita Fackerell, Kerry Smith and Austin Tomlinson voted to bring the bond measure to a vote in May.

To meet filing deadlines, the City Council must submit the bond measure to the elections official no later than Feb. 25. If the 20-year bond is approved by voters, the firehouse could see a four- to six-month design process in 2022 with construction starting in 2023.

“This is our best opportunity to do something that will last for some time,” Sweet said. “It’s not huge. It’s not really the biggest fire station in the county. But we think it’s going to be an adequate enough space to meet future needs.”

Gearhart: Tomlinson named to City Council

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managing forest and estuary restoration projects, as well as maintaining and monitor-

ing the ecological integrity of Columbia Land Trust’s lands,” he said after the meeting.

The appointment to fill the remainder of the Posi-

tion 4 term was unanimously approved by Cockrum and councilors Reita Fackerell, Brent Warren and Kerry Smith.

Tomlinson thanked the

council for the appointment.

“I look forward to working with all you guys on our agenda and filling Dan Jesse’s position,” he said.



R.J. Marx

Cat-lovers and exhibitors at the Cat Fanciers’ Association Cat Show.

Cats: Event draws crowd

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People are glad to be back, he said. “Oh my goodness, yes. They’re having a good time. Today, we’ve had more spectators here than we’ve had in years.”

This year’s show was titled “Cats, Koalas and Kangaroos,” Heidt said. “There are no kangaroo or koalas here, obviously, but the ribbons that we have in the rings reflect that theme.”

Deana Zittel of Seattle brought “Miss Fortune,” a Cornish Rex, a breed

of domesticated cat that emerged from Cornwall in the United Kingdom, noted for its marcel wave crest coat.

“They’re very refined,” Zittel said. “They have long legs. She has an egg-shaped head and a double Roman nose, with oval paws and oval eyes. Ears high up on the head. The curl actually even goes to their whiskers.”

Clatsop Animal volunteers were on-hand to present adoptable cats from the Clatsop County Animal Shelter. Not a dog was to be seen.



R.J. Marx

Artist Keri Rosebraugh works with a team to raise her statue at the Sweet Shop in 2020.

Trantler: Sculpture moved

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together, Rosebraugh said at its opening.

“It’s specific to Gearhart, because of honoring trees and timber industry as well as taking note of the dialogue of the elk in the area,” she said. “The life of wood is totally different from the life of bronze, but yet they can live together harmoniously in the same world and it works out.”

The Sweet Shop legally agreed to host the piece for 10 years, Williams said. The contract stated that if the business sold and the new owners didn’t want it, or if there was another need for the space, the Trantler sculpture could be removed by the artist.

Last October Williams sold the property to Pen Pen Industries LLC, of Port-

land, which lists Grammy Award winner Anjos as the registered agent. The Portland-based musician, known by his stage name, RAC, won a Grammy in 2017 for his remix of Bob Moses’ “Tearing Me Up.”

Rosebraugh said she is working with the Oregon Coast Visitors Association to re-home the piece.

Several sites, including public land in Gearhart, have been considered for the sculpture’s relocation, but nothing formally decided.

Meanwhile, Anjos and Baldwin have yet to announce plans for the store.

“We’re still shooting for a late spring/early summer reopen,” Anjos said. “But we’re still very much in the design phase. We’re very eager to get things going but we just want to make sure it’s great.”

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