

In South County, an advisory committee seeks more autonomy

By ERICK BENDEL
The Astorian

As Clatsop County overhauls its comprehensive plan, a citizen advisory committee tasked with updating its own community plan around Arch Cape has turned in a document that may violate state statute, according to county staff.

The county's comprehensive plan, which hasn't been revamped since 1980, will shape the direction of development — from natural resource management to housing to transportation — in the county's unincorporated areas for the next two decades.

The plan is composed of statewide land use goals, as well as community plans for six regions: Northeast, Clatsop Plains, Lewis & Clark, Olney-Wallooskee, Elsie-Jewell, Seaside Rural and Southwest Coastal. Citizen advisory committees were formed to update each plan.

Last April, the county Board of Commissioners chose to press pause on the update process. They were concerned about the pace of the advisory committees'

work and with some of the policy proposals emerging from them.

The update resumed in August. In December, the committees submitted the results.

As drafted, the community plans contain aspirational goals — a number mention ways to mitigate the local impact of climate change, a goal some county commissioners have expressed misgivings about.

But the Southwest Coastal plan, which covers the wealthy enclaves around Arch Cape, presents distinct problems and may run afoul of Oregon law.

The new committee plan may curtail the rights of property owners and constrain how their land may be developed.

The plan would expand vegetated buffer zones from 25 to 50 feet from stream banks. Areas identified as tsunami inundation zones may be closed to development. The plan recommends vacating old undeveloped plots, essentially dissolving owners' property lines, drawn up before communities were sensitive to the natural topography.

In addition, the plan

includes a section for handling vacation rentals, appearing to get ahead of a process already underway at the county level for regulating the controversial enterprises in unincorporated areas. As the North Coast becomes a popular tourist destination, certain areas have felt the pressures of parking, noise and other nuisances more than others.

In its proposed plan, the Southwest Coastal committee recommends that short-term rentals be defined as commercial ventures that should be confined to commercial zones. They also recommend that the county adopt a plan to phase out short-term rentals in Coastal Residential zones by not allowing property owners to renew or transfer their licenses, and to consider rewarding with tax credits those property owners who end their licenses early.

Narrative

Charles Dice, the chairman of the Southwest Coastal citizen advisory committee, who lives in Cove Beach, said the short-term rental language was included because the expedited deadline to submit

the updated plan happened to fall before the county's short-term rental discussion ended.

"If we were going to say anything on what our recommendations were, we needed to get them into the report," Dice said. "We didn't have the option of waiting."

A county staff memo also pointed to "bias displayed in the narrative."

For example, a section that seeks to resurrect a quasi-judicial Arch Cape design review committee that the county Board of Commissioners dissolved in 2017 notes that the vote was taken "over strong support from the community for continuing" the committee.

This design panel evolved out of the last Southwest Coastal advisory committee that worked on the previous comprehensive plan, and took a heavy hand in the area's land use. The new proposal recommends something similar with the current advisory committee:

"It is the desire of the current CAC that this committee be made a standing committee to represent the region in land use planning and other development matters, and to facilitate the flow of

information between community members and county government," the plan reads.

Dice said the board's desire in bringing back the design review committee was to adhere to the first of the state's 19 planning goals: citizen involvement.

"We felt really strongly that, to adhere to goal one, it was really essential to have a better mechanism for local involvement, such as the design review board," Dice said.

County staff told the Southwest Coastal committee that some of the recommendations may not be legal.

"They had told us it would go through a legal review in any event," Dice said. "So we figured we'd make our recommendations and let it go through the legal review."

'It's ignored'

At a Board of Commissioners work session last month, the board unanimously disapproved of the document.

County Commissioner Lianne Thompson, whose district encompasses Southwest Coastal, asked, "How much more public money — taxpayer dollars — and volunteer time and staff time

and commissioner time do we expend for a group that doesn't want to play by the rules?"

A land use attorney will review the community plans.

Dice said committee members were "surprised and disappointed" by the board's reaction. He said the plan they submitted was not intended as a statement.

"We only had one thing in mind, and that was to make sure that our recommendations ... reflected the current state of affairs in the community — and a number of things clearly have changed in our area over the last 40 years — and to indicate what the people are very interested in," he said.

A Planning Commission review of the Southwest Coastal plan has not been scheduled. The Board of Commissioners is looking to adopt the updated comprehensive plan this summer.

County Commissioner Courtney Bangs said the Southwest Coastal plan highlights a reason for last year's pause.

"Even when staff is giving guidance, and it's giving valuable guidance, it's ignored," Bangs said.

Incumbents pile up huge cash advantage to start 2022 races for Congress

By GARY A. WARNER
Oregon Capital Bureau

Oregon's congressional incumbents have piled up a crushing campaign cash advantage over potential challengers, according to recent federal records.

The one U.S. senator and five incumbent U.S. House members whose seats are up for election in 2022 began the year with a combined \$13,895,939 in the bank, according to the Federal Elections Commission.

The bulging bankrolls are seen as a hedge against the political upheaval that led to control of the White House, U.S. Senate and U.S. House swinging from Republicans to Democrats, with a strong chance of Congress swinging back this year.

"Incumbency still matters but it doesn't have the importance that it once did," said Kyle Kondik, a lead analyst at the University of Virginia Center for Politics. "A warchest can help deter challengers in both primaries and general elections."

The 2022 outcome matters beyond the individual fates of one of 100 U.S. Senators and Oregon's six seats in the 435-member U.S. House.

Republicans can take back the House by flipping just five Democratic seats. The Senate is split 50-50, with Democrats having official control because the U.S. Constitution makes Vice-President Kamala Harris the tiebreaker if needed, in her role as President of the Senate.

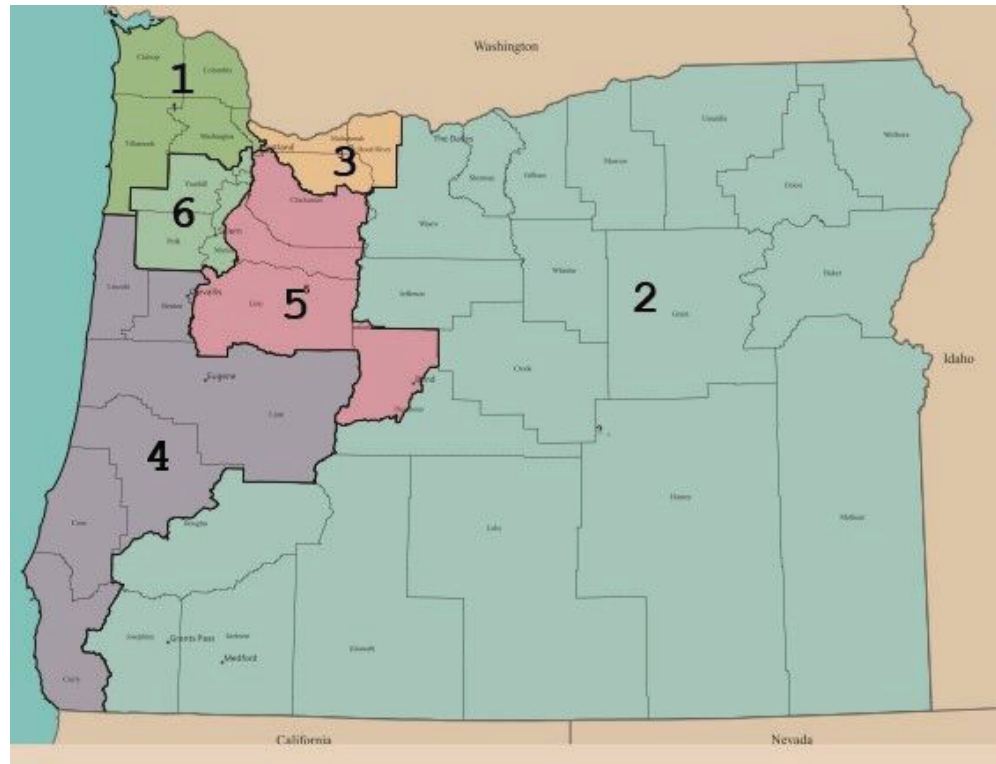
While candidates, especially challengers, will proclaim that elections will be decided on issues, the financial heft of incumbents give them a larger, louder megaphone to make their case. Even in races when there is little audible voice heard from any other side.

Oregon's closed primaries allow voters to winnow dozens of candidates in the May 17 election to usually no more than two when all voters can cast a ballot.

Campaign fundraising last year has been fueled by anxiety over pandemic-related redistricting delays. The geographical shape and partisan tilt of Oregon's congressional districts weren't final until an Oregon Supreme Court decision three days before Thanksgiving 2021.

Congressional race fundraising must follow federal campaign finance rules, which are far more restrictive than Oregon's nearly non-existent limits on races for state offices.

Candidates must still file for office with the Ore-



Gary Warner

Final map of the six congressional districts on the 2022 ballot.

gon Secretary of State by March 8, but it's redundant — the FEC requires a statement of candidacy filing to raise



Cliff Bentz



Peter DeFazio



Kurt Schrader



Ron Wyden

funds. Many were on file as early as January 2021.

On the flip side, candidates who file with the state for congressional races without filing with the FEC aren't in the race.

FEC rules are copious. Individual contributions to federal candidates in the 2022 election are capped at \$2,900 — no direct \$1 million checks of the type signed by Nike founder Phil Knight in the 2018 governor's race are allowed.

There are a host of additional limits for contributions to and from political parties and the extensive menu of different kinds of political action committees.

The rules have turned federal fundraising into an art form, often in the form of "bundling" seemingly separate contributions from individuals who work for the same industry, union or other groups.

Websites such as opensecrets.org parse contributions to give roadmaps to which candidate is getting a major boost from a specific group or sector.

More than half of the Oregon incumbents' haul was held by U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Oregon, who is seeking another six-year term in the seat he first won in a 1996 special election. His year-end report showed slightly under \$7.18 million on hand.

Wyden gets his largest donations from those listing "retired" as their occupation. As chair of the Senate Finance Committee, his

second largest grouping of donations is from the securities and investment sector, with the single largest chunk — \$41,500 — coming from Lazard Ltd., a New York-based investment firm.

Of the seven candidates seeking to oust Wyden who have created fundraising committees with the Federal Election Commission, only four filed year-end reports. Their total available cash: \$78,529. Wyden has nearly 100 times that amount.

The five U.S. House incumbents — four Democrats and one Republican — have just over \$6.7 million on hand at the beginning of the year.

While some races appear now to be slam-dunks, incumbents were unsure who would come out as winners and losers in the redistricting done late last year by the Legislature and reviewed by the courts.

U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici, D-Beaverton inherits a highly Democratic leaning 1st Congressional District. Same for U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer, D-Portland in the 3rd Congressional District.

U.S. Rep. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario, saw his already heavily Republican 2nd Congressional District drawn even more red with Democratic-tilting Bend extracted from his constituency.

In the 1st, 2nd and 3rd districts, incumbents together have raised nearly \$1.9 million. Opponents: zero.

U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Springfield, started 2022

with just over \$1.26 million in the bank and filed a statement of candidacy for the 4th Congressional District race with the FEC in January

2021.

With redistricting securing a stronger Democratic edge, DeFazio announced late last year that he would retire. He's endorsed Labor Commissioner Val Hoyle of Springfield, who dropped a re-election bid to jump into the congressional race.

Republican Alek Skarlatos of Roseburg, who lost a tight race to DeFazio in 2020, is trying again. He is the best financed challenger in any congressional race, with \$348,367 in

CANDIDATE FUNDS FOR 2022 ELECTIONS FOR CONGRESS

Candidates running in the 2022 election for Oregon's one U.S. Senate seat and six congressional seats on the ballot were required to file year-end campaign finance reports with the Federal Elections Commission. The reports included money raised, spent and on-hand in the candidate's main political action committee at the end of 2021.

The list below includes only candidates who filed to create campaign finance committees prior to Jan. 1, 2022. Candidates with who raised or spent less than \$5,000 are not required to file a report. Candidates who did not file reports or had zero activity are not included in this list.

The Oregon Secretary of State requires congressional candidates to file for office. The deadline for the May 17 primary is March 8. Candidates must file with the FEC to raise and spend funds.

The FEC and Oregon Secretary of State lists of candidates do not completely match because of different timelines and requirements.

ONLINE

See this story at seasidesignal.com to see a list of candidates and their campaign funds.

the bank at the start of 2022. He's also receiving money from two political action committees set up to share money between multiple candidates.

In the 5th Congressional District, U.S. Rep. Kurt Schrader, D-Canby, totaled \$3.5 million for his re-election bid. While the district number is the same, the boundaries were radically shifted east during redistricting. He'll need it to fight off liberal challengers in the May primary. Schrader or an insurgent Democrat will face off against a well-financed Republican in November.

The new 6th Congressional District that Oregon received for its population growth over the past decade has no incumbent. Unsurprisingly, 11 candi-

dates have filed for the seat with the FEC, more than all the other five races, incumbents and challengers, put together.

Alongside the national political uncertainty, candidates face two other key factors: closed primaries and delayed redistricting.

Oregon has 2,947,391 registered voters as of September 2021, the most recent count by the Secretary of State. The total includes 1,026,313 Democrats and 729,676 Republicans.

Both parties hold closed primaries, wherein only registered party members can vote on May 17. The scores of candidates for offices ranging from U.S. Senator and governor to county commissioners are winnowed to mostly one-on-one races for the general election.



Catch up on preventative care.

Early on in the pandemic, many people put off in-person doctor visits. It's time to catch up on any preventative health services you missed. These can include:

- Mammograms and pap smears
- Screenings for diseases and cancer
- Childhood vaccines and annual visits
- Flu and pneumonia shots
- Routine checkups to get advice on diet, exercise and safety

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