

# Vandenberg is honored at convention center retirement party

**SEEN FROM SEASIDE**

R.J. MARX



Russ Vandenberg, general manager of the Seaside Civic and Convention Center, announced his retirement this spring.

At his retirement party in the Seamist room on July 28, community members and city staff saluted Vandenberg as he prepared to turn over the reins to Brian Owen.

As the center's general manager since 2005, Vandenberg oversaw the day-to-day management of the convention center that includes administration, marketing, sales, operations, fiscal responsibility and approval of facility contracts.

He announced his retirement this spring.

Vandenberg said it was "tough when you walk away."

"I think it's a process you go through whenever you leave," he said. "I call it 'good relationships.' You build relationships with staff, you've got relationships with the public and with the friends and the building. And it's tough when you walk away. It's not an easy thing to leave something that you developed over the years. It's an emotional time. It's exciting to start the new chapter."

He and his wife, JoAnn, will return to Southern California.

"We are back in our Southern California home that we've owned since before we ever moved up here," he said. "The intent was always to go back at some stage because of our extended family. My wife and I have seven kids between us and 16 grandkids and three great grandkids. They're going to keep me busy."



R.J. Marx

Brian Owen and Russ Vandenberg, at Vandenberg's July 28 retirement party.

**'IT JUST MAKES ME FEEL REALLY GOOD TO HAVE ALL THE FRIENDS WHO HAVE COME BY AND SAID GOODBYE. HOPEFULLY, IT'S NOT FOREVER AND I'LL PLAN TO COME BACK AT LEAST ONCE OR TWICE A YEAR AND VISIT WITH FOLKS IN THE BUILDING. BUT IT'S GOT SOME MIXED EMOTIONS. I'M JUST VERY GRATEFUL FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK IN THIS GREAT CITY.'**

Russ Vandenberg

Vandenberg led the center's \$15 million renovation in 2018, paid for by an increase in visitor room tax. Renovations and upgrades to ballrooms, offices, the lobby, lighting, storage and more are among the major changes unveiled, as the facility expanded by 55,000 square feet, or 20%.

The project was noted for coming in on-time and under budget, largely due to Vandenberg's stewardship and collaboration with convention center staff and commissioners, contractors, management team and city partners.

He managed the center during pandemic restrictions and has booked groups for the next 10 years.

Owen, who had served as CEO of the Seaside Chamber of Commerce since 2016, was selected as executive director after a national search process.

"I told Brian it's like guiding a ship," Vandenberg said. "Looking ahead and making sure the waters clear and if you see any danger signs, you fix them before it happens. And just to stay on course, I know it's a cliché, but it's a reality of the position. You're more or less the captain and you're guiding the ship and making sure it's sailing smoothly."

Owen will have the option of continuing the path it's on, Vandenberg said. "Or maybe you might see something different with a different set of eyes looking at the building."

Vandenberg said he leaves with mixed emotions.

"It just makes me feel really good to have all the friends who have come by and said goodbye," he said. "Hopefully, it's not forever and I'll plan to come back at least once or twice a year and visit with folks in the building. But it's got some mixed emotions. I'm just very grateful for the opportunity to work in this great city."

**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

**People first, money second**

I attended Monday night's city council meeting to support my neighbor, Frank "Corey" Buck, in his appeal of the conditional use permit issued to his next door neighbor for a vacation rental dwelling.

During the public comment portion of the meeting, four of us spoke about the interactions we've had with the people who are renting those VRDs and the negative impact they've had on our lives, our neighborhoods, and the infrastructure, such as the increased demand for electricity, water and waste disposal. The issue regarding the multitude of illegal VRDs in the area was also addressed.

Unfortunately, the only takeaway for the councilors was the matter of the illegal VRDs. Not the negative impact that the licensed VRDs are having on our quality of life, which is slowly deteriorating. They went ahead and denied Mr. Buck's appeal and approved the permit for the neighbor after all. To say I was disappointed would be an understatement. It's like they didn't hear a word we said.

Recently, I received a document regarding the new home construction across the street from me. The owner/builder is looking to make it into a VRD as well. Coincidentally enough, he filed his paperwork just before the deadline took effect requiring new construction to wait two years before becoming a VRD. I wonder how that happened.

Our city councilors have fallen short of their responsibilities to those they represent and serve. It should be people first and money second. Not the other way around.

Marti Wajc  
Seaside

**Independent Party nominates Laity for state House**

The Independent Party of Oregon nominated Logan Laity to represent the North Coast in the Oregon House of Representatives. The Independent Party state nominating caucus met to consider candidates and was particularly impressed by Laity's policy vision, experience working across party lines, and personal integrity.

Sal Peralta, the Independent Party's coastal representative added:

"The Independent Party of Oregon has long advocated for policies to address homelessness, housing affordability, and public safety. These are key issues to us on the

North Coast, and we trust Logan to be our champion in the legislature."

Laity stated: "I entered this race to ensure every person on the Coast has the support we need to continue to live here. As a candidate, I have maintained a voice that represents the people of our community I look forward to representing in Salem. Earning the nomination of the Independent Party means that the movement around this campaign speaks for the broad views that exist on the Coast and as state rep, I'll bring that vision to Salem."

Logan Laity, a businessman from Tillamook, is one of three candidates vying for a seat in the legislature to represent Clatskanie and Astoria to Tillamook and Neskowin, communities that make up Oregon House District 32. Other candidates in the race are self-described Republicans.

The Independent Party of Oregon represents 137,972 voters voters in Oregon, plus independent leaning non-affiliated voters. Laity is also the Democratic Party nominee.

Mary McGinnis  
Rockaway Beach

**Beyond egregious**

To the Administration of Clatsop County:

The following is my response to the county's pretext for a "customer satisfaction survey" request.

It is beyond egregious as the county continues to blackmail voters with the threat of losing \$700,000 in tax revenue if Ordinance 22-05, which permits short-term rentals in unincorporated Clatsop County, is overturned.

Now using a publicly funded county website under the guises of an informational Q&A. The fact remains that the \$700,000 was "illegally" gained in the first place. I might suggest that the county reach outside its current county leadership for guidance and assistance in properly dealing with this referendum. The county appears beyond its depth in managing its way through this issue.

As to the commissioners' attempt at appeasement by proposing caps, that ship has sailed. There is no such thing as half justice or half equality. It is either right or it is wrong and the county has been wrong from the beginning when they created this issue.

P.S. Has this "dramatic" \$700,000 number been independently audited? I would like to see the backup for this number, you can redact names and locations.

Jim Aalberg  
Warrenton

# Signal wins awards at Better Newspaper Contest

Seaside Signal



Matthew Vann, R.J. Marx, Jonathan Williams and Emily Lindblom contributed to the Signal award-winning design team.



'Clemency sought in 1997 double murder,' took second place for editorial column in the Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association contest.

The Signal was recognized with associate member awards from the Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association for work published in 2021.

In the annual Better Newspaper Contest, announced on July 28 and July 29 in Welches, the Signal won first place for design and second place for editor R.J. Marx for best editorial column.

Marx received the award for "Clemency sought in 1997 double murder," about the request for parole by Jesse McAllister after "thrill killings" on the beach in Seaside.

The Astorian was recognized with several awards from the Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association for work published in 2021.

In the annual Better Newspaper Contest, The Astorian won first place for Page One design for the work of page designer Matt Vann, editor Derrick DePledge and former associate editor Jonathan Williams.

The newspaper won first place for graphics for the work of production manager John Bruijn.

The Astorian took second place for editorial page and third place for overall website.

The Astorian was third for general excellence.

Several reporters earned individual awards.

Nicole Bales was second place for enterprise reporting.

Erick Bengel was second place for writing.

Ethan Myers was second place for education coverage.

Williams was second place and Elleda Wilson was third place for local column.

Reporters were also recognized for their work at other Oregon newspapers last year.

Bales was second place for education coverage while at The Bulletin in Bend.

Abbey McDonald shared first-place awards for enterprise reporting and coverage of business and economic issues while at the Malheur Enterprise in Vale, Oregon.

**PUBLIC MEETINGS**

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| <p><b>Contact local agencies for latest meeting information and attendance guidelines.</b></p> <p><b>MONDAY, AUG. 8</b></p> <p>Seaside City Council, 7 p.m., 989 Broadway.</p> <p><b>THURSDAY, AUG. 11</b></p> <p>Seaside Convention Center Commission, 5 p.m., 415 First Ave., Seaside.</p> <p><b>Gearhart Planning</b></p> | <p><b>Commission, 6 p.m.,</b> cityofgearhart.com.</p> <p><b>TUESDAY, AUG. 16</b></p> <p><b>Community Emergency Response Team, 5 p.m.,</b> 989 Broadway.</p> <p><b>Seaside Planning Commission, work session,</b> 6 p.m., 989 Broadway.</p> <p><b>Seaside School District, 6 p.m.,</b> 2600 Spruce Dr.</p> <p><b>WEDNESDAY, AUG. 17</b></p> <p><b>Tourism Advisory</b></p> | <p><b>Committee, 3 p.m., 989</b> Broadway.</p> <p><b>THURSDAY, AUG. 18</b></p> <p><b>Transportation Advisory Commission, 6 p.m., 989</b> Broadway.</p> <p><b>MONDAY, AUG. 22</b></p> <p><b>Seaside City Council, 7 p.m.,</b> 989 Broadway.</p> <p><b>TUESDAY, AUG. 30</b></p> <p><b>Seaside Airport Advisory Committee, 6 p.m.,</b> 989 Broadway.</p> | <p><b>THURSDAY, SEPT. 1</b></p> <p><b>Seaside Parks Advisory Committee, 6 p.m., 989</b> Broadway.</p> <p><b>TUESDAY, SEPT. 6</b></p> <p><b>Seaside Community Center Commission, 10 a.m.,</b> Bob Chisholm Community Center, 1225 Avenue A.</p> <p><b>Seaside Planning Commission, 6 p.m., 989</b> Broadway.</p> |
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