

# City, county eye affordable housing collaboration

**SEEN FROM SEASIDE**  
R.J. MARX



Two properties on the north end of Seaside could be part of a collaboration with Clatsop County on affordable housing.

“The county has offered some land to Seaside and we are underway with getting that land that will go for some type of affordable housing that’s to be determined,” said City Councilor Steve Wright, who serves as chairman of a city task force. “It’s possibly as many as 24 more units, if it fits.”

The county would transfer the land at no cost.

The housing task force brought voices from the county and regional level to City Hall on Aug. 1 with Elissa Gertler, the executive director of the Northwest Oregon Housing Authority and Pamela Wev, a Clatsop County commissioner who represents the county on the housing authority board.

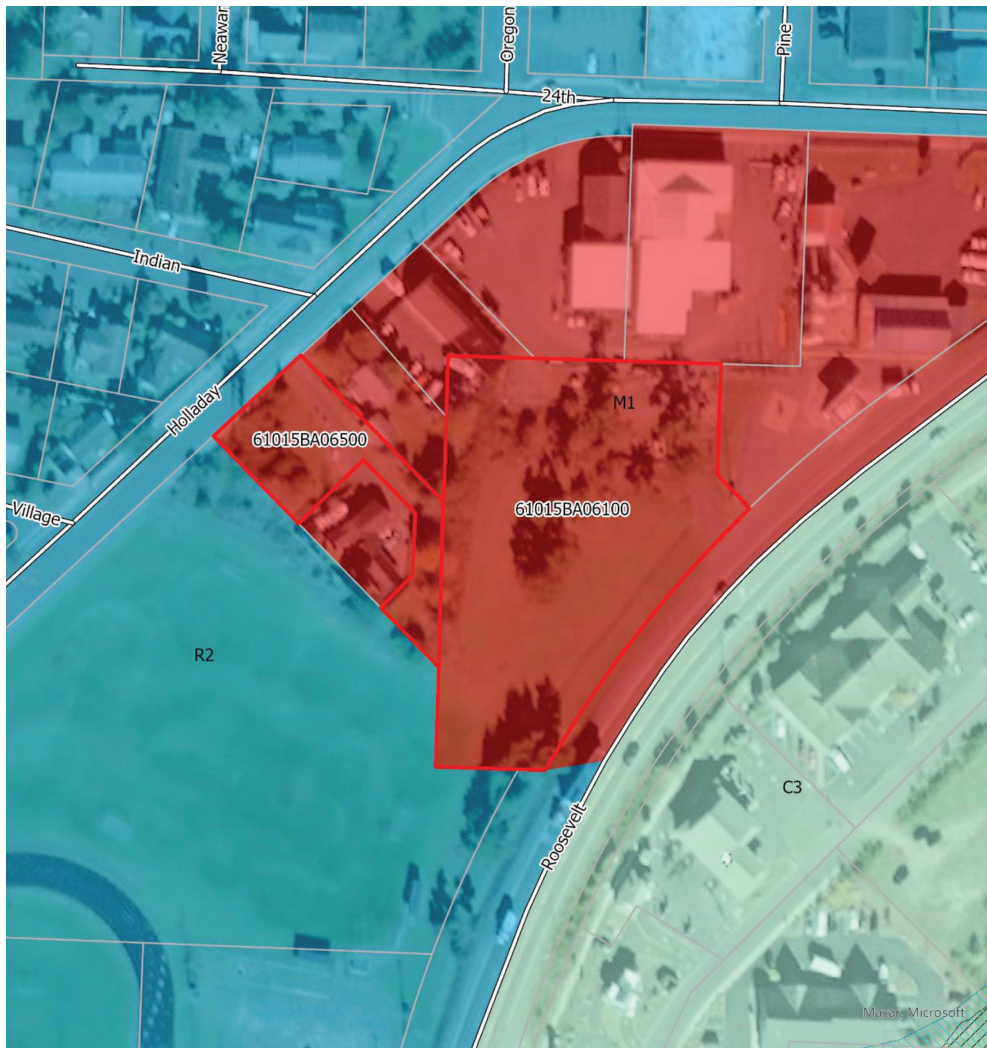
As many as 3,000 housing units are needed to meet demand in the county.

In April, the county issued a request for expression of interest on 15 surplus properties that could be used for housing, child care and social services. Four of the properties are in Seaside.

“We received a response from the city of Seaside regarding the following accounts to utilize for affordable housing,” Monica Steele, the assistant county manager, said. “While some of these sites might require some zoning changes, those are options the city is exploring as well as working with potential developers.”

Two of the parcels are designated wetlands and will remain so, Wright said, possibly to be used in the future for mitigation offsets.

But two sites near the former high



Two of the four Seaside sites listed by the county for affordable housing purposes. Tax Lots 6500 and 6100 are both located in the M-1 industrial zone, and neither has any development constraints, according to the county’s report.

school show housing potential.

“I believe two of the parcels — about 1.5 acre — can be used for building affordable housing,” Wright said. “We will accept them on that basis, once we review the terms and conditions applied by the county.”

The sites are north of the “North 40,” former school district land owned by the city and used as sports fields.

Steele said the county Board of Commissioners is supportive of the expression of interest submitted by Seaside to utilize the sites for affordable housing

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Elissa Gertler, executive director, Northwest Oregon Housing Authority

development.

The conversation comes as the city seeks to address a shortage of workforce and affordable housing, while meeting the needs of the homeless.

The housing authority owns, manages or partners to serve low- and moderate-income tenants and administers a federal housing choice voucher program.

“One of the things I think that the board has wanted in hiring me is to really start thinking about the partnerships that go beyond the housing authority,” Gertler said of the county, cities, developers and residents.

“It really takes all hands,” she said. “I’m hoping that NOHA will not just focus on what we own and manage, but how to help cities have capacity, how to find resources, have the pieces be stronger together than we are on our own, so that we can do more together.”

## Housing task force weighs options for help

Some want to tap into housing authority

By ERICK BENGEL  
The Astorian

A regional housing task force may try to fold the Northwest Oregon Housing Authority into the process of finding local solutions to the shortage of affordable and workforce housing.

The task force — a group of elected and administrative officials, as well as planning staff, from Clatsop County and North Coast cities — met in late July at the Seaside High School library. It marked the first meeting since an inaugural work session brought the local governments together in May at the Clatsop County Fairgrounds.

Jeff Adams, Cannon Beach’s community development director, led the meeting, while Denise Lofman, the director of the Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce, helped facilitate the discussion.

As the topic of next steps came up, county staff noted the absence of the Northwest Oregon Housing Authority.

The housing authority manages properties for people with low and moderate incomes in Clatsop, Columbia and Tillamook counties. It runs a federal housing choice voucher program that helps low-income families and vulnerable individuals find places to rent.

County Manager Don Bohn said that the housing authority, unlike the county, has staff and resources devoted to the housing issue. “From my thinking, what’s going to be important is to bring NOHA along,” he said.

Bohn said the county, in considering

what to do with its federal American Rescue Plan Act funds, offered money to the housing authority so the agency could hire a housing development expert who could represent the interests of the county. He said the housing authority turned the offer down.

“We’re happy to give them money today if they’re willing to hire somebody who can provide some of that leadership on the housing side,” Bohn said.

Brent Warren, a Gearhart city councilor, agreed that someone should shepherd the process and provide technical expertise, but questioned whether the housing authority was in a position to do it.

The housing authority is emerging from a period of struggle in leadership and finance.

An audit and review of the housing authority’s housing choice voucher pro-

gram yielded a poor rating in January 2020 that led to a corrective action plan. Working with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the agency has improved its rating from “troubled” to a “standard performer.”

At one point, the agency had a budget deficit that led to the suspension of new vouchers. Little more than a year ago, the housing authority started issuing vouchers again, The Astorian reported.

The housing authority recently hired an executive director after a long period with an interim director.

Bohn told the group that he sees the housing authority, and their ability to fund experts that can float into the cities, as a “missing piece” of the conversation.

“They can be kind of the conduit,” he said. “They could be figuring out where the commonalities are, where the opportunities are.”

**GUEST COLUMN**

## An abundance of caution needed

**GUEST COLUMN**  
DANA GOULD



I am writing in response to the article in the Seaside Signal about the Gearhart City Council’s efforts to increase security at City Hall. I would like to clarify that the council has yet to make its final decision on this matter.

The options described in the article will be discussed further before this issue is put to a vote. I was not on Gearhart’s City Council when the issue of improving security was first raised. It is my understanding this became a concern when rumors about weapons being brought into council meetings began to spread shortly before my appointment.

This isn’t the first time rumors about gun threats have made their way around the city. This paper previously reported on a perceived gun threat posted on a Facebook site in 2019.

In this most recent instance, two citizens also heard a rumor about guns at the meetings and called the Clatsop County Sheriff. I am happy to report the Clatsop County Sheriff’s Office and Gearhart’s police chief

have both determined there is no immediate known risk to citizens, councilors, or employees. I concur with their threat assessment.

I have seen social media posts scoffing at the council’s concern for mitigating the impact of such rumors in the future. Strangely, the persons making those posts are attacking the city for considering increased security measures, while discounting the fact that citizens were genuinely scared by the rumors, and in at least two instances they were worried enough to file police reports.

I applaud Mayor Smith’s quick and decisive action in putting temporary procedures in place to ensure council meetings are safe, while still allowing citizens to participate via Zoom. He made an appropriate decision based on the limited information he had at the time.

As a Gearhart homeowner said in the July meeting, “See something, say something.” In this case, the mayor also fulfilled his obligation to citizens by doing something. Not doing something would have been unconscionable.

Now that the matter has been unfounded through investigation, it’s time to let it drop. However, it is reasonable for the council to first take steps to repair the damage to public confidence these types of rumors can create, and to prevent a repeat.

My objection to the proposal for a walk through metal detector was, in part, because I concur with the sheriff’s and police chief’s threat assessment. Installing a walk through metal detector may create more fear and could present difficulties for those with disabilities.

Banning guns in government buildings is not unusual. Particularly in locations such as courthouses and council meetings where disagreements are common and emotions may run high.

As a concealed carry weapons license holder, I know I am usually prohibited from carrying my weapon into such locations. However, if we are going to prevent citizens from bringing weapons that may be used for self-defense, I do think the city is then obligated to provide an alternative means of protection for them. That is just one of many reasons why I believe a law enforcement officer needs to be present.

I cannot speak for the entire City Council, but I suspect they agree with me that we’d all like to get past this issue and resume regular in person meetings as soon as possible. I want citizens to know it is safe to come to city hall when that happens. I will not apologize for acting in an abundance of caution when safety is a concern.

Dana Gould is a Gearhart city councilor.

**PUBLIC MEETINGS**

**Contact local agencies for latest meeting information and attendance guidelines.**

**TUESDAY, AUG. 16**

**Community Emergency Response Team,** 5 p.m., 989 Broadway.

**Seaside School District,** 6 p.m., 2600 Spruce Drive.

**Seaside Planning Commission,** work session, 6 p.m., 989 Broadway.

**WEDNESDAY, AUG. 17**

**Tourism Advisory Committee,** 3 p.m., 989 Broadway.

**THURSDAY, AUG. 18**

**Transportation Advisory Commission,** 6 p.m., 989 Broadway.

**Gearhart City Council,** work session, 6:30 p.m., cityofgearhart.com.

**TUESDAY, AUG. 30**

**Gearhart City Council,** work session, 6:30 p.m., cityofgearhart.com.

**THURSDAY, SEPT. 1**

**Seaside Parks Advisory Committee,** 6 p.m., 989 Broadway.

**TUESDAY, SEPT. 6**

**Seaside Community Center Commission,** 10 a.m., Bob Chisholm Community Center, 1225 Avenue A.

**Seaside Library Board,** 4:30 p.m., 1131 Broadway.

**Seaside Planning Commission,** 6 p.m., 989 Broadway.



**PUBLISHER**  
Kari Borgen

**EDITOR**  
R.J. Marx

**CIRCULATION MANAGER**  
Samantha Stinnett

**ADVERTISING SALES MANAGER**  
Sarah Silver-Tecza

**PRODUCTION MANAGER**  
John D. Bruijn

**CONTRIBUTING WRITERS**  
Skyler Archibald  
Joshua Heineman  
Katherine Lacaze

**CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER**  
Jeff TerHar

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