

Minutes of the  
**CANNON BEACH CITY COUNCIL**  
**WORK SESSION**  
Tuesday, December 13, 2011  
Council Chambers

Present: Mayor Mike Morgan; Council President Sam Steidel; Councilors Nancy Giasson, Wendy Higgins and Melissa Cadwallader

Excused: None

Staff: City Manager Rich Mays and Administrative Assistant Brandy Brien

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Morgan called the work session to order at 5:30 p.m.

Mayor Morgan suggested that the Council move Discussion Item #5 with regard to resolution concerning Cannon Beach Elementary School to Discussion Item #2. Council agreed.

PRESENTATIONS

(1) **Pedestrian Evacuation Route Maps by the Emergency Preparedness Committee (EPREP)**

Mays summarized his staff report, noting that the EPREP Committee has been working with City staff to better define pedestrian evacuation route maps and commended the Committee on their ongoing effort to provide evacuation planning and public education to the Cannon Beach community.

Committee Member Les Wierson, on behalf of the EPREP Committee, made a presentation, and initially noted that the Committee has been working to make our community better prepared. The presentation provided an overview of the Committee's progress to date, ten (10) draft evacuation route maps for the City, their continuing study and improvements, next steps and plans for emergency education and practice. Wierson concluded by stating that, "Remember the life we save may be yours or your loved ones."

Council discussed potential improvements to the maps and thanked Wierson and the Committee for their hard work.

Morgan suggested that staff post the draft maps on the City's website for people to view for comments and suggestions.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

(2) **Draft Resolution for the Purpose of the Closure of the Cannon Beach Elementary School**

Mays summarized his staff report, noting that on November 8, 2011, the City Council discussed the fact that it may be necessary to take action on concerns with regard to the Cannon Beach Elementary School (CBES) in order to protect Cannon Beach children from a Cascadia Earthquake and Tsunami. He noted that a draft resolution is enclosed in the packet, noting that its contents include the findings with regard to the CBES structure, scientific analysis, recognizes that the Elementary School is an integral part of the community; however given the severity of the risk, the safety must take precedence.

Mays concluded that the draft concludes that it be resolved that "the Common Council of the City of Cannon Beach does hereby support a decision by the Seaside School District to relocate the students and staff from Cannon Beach Elementary School to the Seaside Heights Elementary School by the beginning of the 2012 school year, in order to protect Cannon Beach children from a Cascadia Earthquake and Tsunami event."

Mayor Morgan stated that this resolution is a draft and that the Council intends to hold a public comment and consider a final draft at the January 3, 2012, City Council Meeting. He stated that generally work sessions are for discussion between councilors and staff; however in this instance, Council will be accepting limited public comments and he asked that persons that wish to testify, please keep their testimony to two (2) minutes, if possible.

Cadwallader, as she has previously stated, reviewed her concerns that very poor construction of Cannon Beach Elementary School is going to make evacuation very difficult or the inability for students and staff to exit the building in the event of an earthquake. She values the Elementary School in the community, however the facts have been described in detail, the building has been deteriorating for 50 years and is not safe. She believes that the Council is very serious with regard to the safety of the public and the children She supports a decision to close the school in that building at that location.

Higgins stated that she understands the value of a small community and having an elementary school in the community, however she has sat with Council and others, and now understands the severity of the dangers that the structure poses, she agrees with Cadwallader, that the best interest for our children and grandchildren would be to close the school at that location and she supports the draft resolution.

Giasson stated that she has lived here for eight (8) years, not long enough to have experienced the value of that generations of residents have experience at CBES; however she respects that perspective and that a community needs a school to be a well rounded community, however, given the new information with regard to the dangers of the building, she too agrees with Cadwallader and Higgins in support of the draft resolution. She suggested that the resolution does not need to specify that CBES be incorporated into Seaside Heights Elementary, that the intent was to incorporate them into the rest of the Seaside School District.

Steidel stated that he is torn as he understands the balance and the risk, because of Japan, the City is more aware of the risks, and he is aware that the structure is dangerous, noting that he was attending CBES at the time of the last distant tsunami in 1964, noting that the magnitude of that tsunami was a lower level than what is expected to happen. Steidel noted that the Council must consider the risk and whether or not relocating the school out of the community at this time is worth the risk or are the chances of a tsunami really distant. Also, he considers that if the students are relocated to Seaside and Cannon Beach did suffer a tsunami, that would place the students away from their community in an emergency situation. Steidel concluded that the building is one of the few buildings in Cannon Beach that has not changed and is in terrible shape. He feels that the Council should support the safe route to relocate the students and staff, however the emotional aspects of this matter are tough.

Morgan stated that he agrees with the general consensus of the Council, noting that until he met with Architect Jay Raskin and Structural Engineer Andy Stricter, he was unaware of the severity of the building at CBES, it is structurally fragile. Not only that, in a Cascadia Event, occupants would lose precious time trying to exit the failing building and the quickest route for evacuation, the Ecola Creek Bridge, will be collapsed. Emotionally, he agrees, this is a very tough issue, however he does not believe that it is necessarily wise to keep the students and staff at CBES if there is room for them at a safe school that is structurally sound. He also noted that students practice an alternate evacuation route traveling South on Spruce Street to higher ground at the Cannon Beach Bible Church on Hills Lane, however that is not a solution, even on a good day with no power lines and trees down, the trip would take twenty-five (25) minutes, and according to scientists, after an earthquake occurs, it will take fifteen (15) to twenty (20) minutes for a tsunami to hit shore.

Morgan concluded by noting that this resolution is a recommendation to the School Board, the City Council does not have the authority to close the school.

Mays noted that if the Council does adopt this resolution on January 3, 2012, that the School Board will hold a meeting to discuss the matter further and parents and community members will have the opportunity to share their thoughts.

David Robinson, School Board Member, noted that he is concerned for the safety of our kids.

In response to comments regarding an alternate location for CBES, Steidel stated that the City has spent a lot of time researching an alternate location, however has been unsuccessful.

Morgan asked if Raskin wished to comment with regard to the findings that were discussed at the November 8, 2011, City Council Work Session.

Jay Raskin, Architect stated that he, Building Official Mark Brien, Structural Engineer Andy Stricter, Councilor Cadwallader and Mayor Morgan were present during the evaluation of the CBES structure. He reviewed that there are three sections of CBES under an interconnected roof, the main section being the primary concern, the main classroom building. The structure is not unsafe to stand in, however in the event of an earthquake, especially an earthquake offshore, it could collapse. There are walls with not much laterals that will fail and cause openings to be hard to open, a primary concern, in particular, is the concrete canopy attached to the north side of the classrooms that hangs over a walkway, because it is poorly attached, the canopy will pull away and fall down, blocking the exits and the gymnasium has a three hinged arch that will fail and cause the exits to be racked. Raskin concluded that will there be an imminent collapse of the building, possibly, it will certainly be very difficult to exit and there will not be enough time to evacuate to higher ground.

In response to a question from Bill Brehm, EPREP Committee Chair, Raskin confirmed that if the canopy were removed that it would improve the safety.

There were a number of parents and/or teachers present, some of which expressed concern with regard to the draft resolution to be considered by the City Council.

Phillip Simmons, parent, noted leadership concerns and stated that he disagrees with the decision to consider this resolution, noting that closing the school is easy, keeping it open is hard and he believes that doing the hard thing is the right thing. He explained that he is emotional and frustrated. Simmons stated that the major reason for concern is that the awning will fall, he suggested that the canopy be removed and that would increase the evacuation rate. Simmons continued that he understands that the Council has explored alternate locations for CBES, however believes that more time and effort should be spent. He urged Council not to support closing CBES, noting that once the school is gone, it is gone and will never come back and the City will not be the same without it. Simmons noted that he, and he knows several others, will do whatever it takes to keep the school in Cannon Beach. Simmons concluded that he has concerns with Seaside Heights Elementary, the school that the students would be moved to, noting that it is not designed to withstand an earthquake and, he believes that it is difficult to exit as it has too many hallways.

Morgan stated that he was informed that Seaside Heights Elementary ranks a "3" on a scale of 1-5 (5 = best), CBES ranks under 1. Simmons does not believe that the source is accurate.

Suzy Roehr, teacher and parent, noted concerns that if the School District makes the decision to relocate students and staff from CBES to another school, Gearhart Elementary or Seaside Heights Elementary, that an evaluation and a report from a structural engineer should be conducted. Roehr concluded that the safety of the other schools in the District is important to consider prior to making a decision to relocate the students to a school that may not be rated any better than CBES.

Buffy Simmons, parent, stated that the parents of children at CBES have already been given the option to transfer their child, and not one parent has asked that their child be transferred. She accredits that to the many values of CBES; primarily the high-ranking education and the community feel. Her family chose to live here, in the Cannon Beach boundary, because she believes in the education at CBES. B. Simmons urged the Council to look for a solution to keep the school in the City, it is important. She concluded that she does not want to live in Seaside and lose the community feel and thanked the Council for the opportunity to speak.

Lisa Nofield, parent, stated that she believes in CBES is the heart of our community and she would like it to remain until the School District combines and constructs the super school. She asked that the Council explore other options. Nofield noted that perhaps the pedestrian bridge is a solution, it is needed not only for CBES, but also for the Cannon Beach Christian Conference Center and the downtown area to evacuate.

Mike Johnson, stated that he attended CBES. He reiterated P. Simmons comments with regard to doing the right thing. He also noted that he believes that the doors in every school in this District will be racked in the event of an earthquake. Johnson concluded that even the Seaside High School is in imminent danger of a tsunami wave.

Alaina Giguere, parent, noted concerns that the Council would consider this matter. She also agrees to remove the awning and noted that relocating the school has been discussed since the 60's and is no closer today than it was back then. Giguere believes that sending the children to Seaside is not the solution, having the children closer is more important and traveling to Seaside on the bus may even pose dangers, through the floods. She urged Council to not support or consider this resolution and asked that Council to leave the decision up to the parents.

Duane Johnson, former School Board Member, stated that he believes that the other Seaside District Schools have issues, for example the Seaside High School has had a number of settling problems. Also, Seaside Heights Elementary has a huge library with poor bracing due to cracks in the structure, and that structure is not any safer. D. Johnson recommend that the Council evaluate the Seaside Heights structure, noting that he does not believe that there is a safer school than Cannon Beach.

Raskin stated that he agrees with the majority of the comments made; removing the canopy would increase safety, other schools will experience failures in the event of an earthquake; however there are far more serious issues at CBES, and the primary concern is that there will be no time to evacuate. There will be a number of building failures that will still cause a tremendous delay in evacuating to higher ground.

Leonard Skreba, resident, expressed that he disagrees with discussions regarding Cascadia events.

Jan Siebert Wahrmond, supports schools in the community; however agrees that CBES's current location is not safe. She suggested that parents form a committee to search for an alternate location for the school, noting that even though this search has been conducted in the past that there may be new possibilities.

Morgan stated that the City did spend a lot of time searching for an alternate location and each potential site was problematic.

Steidel stated that the issue of the school has been discussed on a number of occasions and he appreciates that the Council now has some input with regard to the matter since input is crucial for Council to make these tough decisions. He noted that Council has not made any decisions, this is a work session to discuss the matter.

P. Simmons reiterated his comments and stated that he will raise support to remove the awning and fight to keep the school.

In response to Steidel comments regarding, B. Simmons noted that parents are very busy and were unaware of previous discussions.

Morgan appreciated comments and noted that there will be more public discussion at the January 3, 2012, City Council Meeting, he also urged those interesting to submit written comments to the Council. Council concurred.

### **(3) City of Cannon Beach Employee Handbook**

Mays summarized his staff report.

In response to a question from Giasson, Mays stated that the City currently does not have a formal handbook, there are a number of policies combined that are utilized as the handbook. The proposed manual is text similar to other standard employee handbooks.

Herdener stated that the City's Insurance Company, County Insurance Services (CIS), provided a draft and City staff, including Administrative Assistant Stephanie McGuire made some revisions specific to the City of Cannon Beach.

Council reviewed and discussed the handbook with staff. Mays confirmed that the *Employee Handbook* would be considered at the January 3, 2012, City Council Meeting.

**(4) Fleet Safety Program**

Sinclair summarized her staff report, noting that the City is implementing several best practice programs that have been recommended by the City County Insurance Services (CIS). Basically, the program will establish rules and guidelines for safe maintenance and operation of City vehicles and equipment. Also, the City will be able to review motor vehicle record and a membership in Oregon DV's DAVE system that provides the City with an automated reporting of drivers' license changes and/or activities. Sinclair also noted that the City will receive \$1,000 reduction in insurance premiums.

Council reviewed the program with staff and thanked Sinclair for her presentation of the material.

**(4) Emergency Planning/Community Forum: Cascadia Event Preparedness - Capital Projects**

Mays summarized his staff report and reviewed that there have been many public discussions regarding this matter. Most recently the discussion was incorporated into the City Potluck on December 12, 2011, at the Cannon Beach Chamber of Commerce, there were forty (40) citizens in attendance; however there was not a lot of input.

Council discussed their progress to date and agreed to discuss the primary capital projects at their upcoming retreat and through the budget process to determine if funds should be set aside for purchasing additional supplies and potentially moving forward with the potential bridge across Ecola Creek.

Jan Siebert-Wahrmund, reiterated her concerns, from previous discussions, with regard to the fact that the installing an emergency evacuation bridge may give residents and visitors a false sense of hope and cause them to flee towards the bridge rather than taking the recommended evacuation route.

Morgan and Giasson confirmed that the bridge will be discussed further prior to making any decisions. Council agreed.

**(7) Good of the Order / Public Comment**

Cadwallader scheduled their 2012 City Council Retreat for January 21, 2012, at 9:00 a.m. The location will be determined at a later date.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The work session was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

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Brandy Brien, Administrative Assistant

ATTEST:

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Mike Morgan, Mayor