

Cheryl Lund

From: Margaret Marino
Sent: Wednesday, May 17, 2017 6:29 AM
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Cc: Hannah Dankbar
Subject: Sand Dune Committee Vegetation Committee

Mayor of Gearhart
Gearhart City Council
Gearhart City Manager
City Planner
Gearhart Police Chief
Gearhart Fire Chief

May 17, 2017

I believe each of you know how deeply I care about Gearhart, now and for the future. You have listened to me for months at City Council and Planning meetings, questioned the need for the work I proposed and then provided advice and direction. That is what makes this a very difficult letter to write.

Thirty years ago, my husband and I came to Gearhart for the first time and three years later we built a home in the Gearhart Meadows. Fifteen years ago, we became full time residents of Gearhart. Eleven years ago, I moved my parents here to care for them until each of them passed. This is the place we call home.

One year ago, when I began to talk to people about my vision I'd nurtured for years for the Gearhart dunes, I hoped to launch a project that could encourage a sense of community and lasting purpose that I had seen torn apart by so much disregard and disrespect for each other over the last several years.

On this journey, I asked each and every person the same series of questions. I asked each of you these same questions:

- Would removing the invasive vegetation and trees cause harm to the beach dunes?
- If so, what harm?
- Could such work benefit the environment of the dunes?
- What wonder might we even begin to consider?

The initial response was extremely consistent. "Are you crazy? This is Gearhart and it is impossible to do anything in Gearhart. Everyone can say *no* and no one can say *yes*." The next reaction was more encouraging. People wanted to figure out what we *could* do. And then they gave lots of help. How about working with Seaside High School and the Pacifica Project? Call the State Invasive Weed folks? Call OPRD? Call Necanicum Watershed Council? Call NCLC? Call SCWCD? Call the Snowy Plover people? And the list went on.

Was this doable? Should it be? A wise observation shared in some form in more than one conversation:

Preventing invasive species is really important. We introduced them, so we are responsible for controlling them. They are invasive because they can out-compete native species and do not create superior habitat and food sources for our native critters. When native plant life is choked out, native wildlife can also be at risk.

A year has gone by. I have learned it was naïve to believe this was something that could bring out the best in our town. I followed the recommendation of North Coast Land Conservancy's founder, Neil Maine, to work with the highly-respected ecologist Kathleen Sayce, worked hard to communicate facts, partnered with the City Council and the Planning Commission to provide education through a Town Hall meeting, responded to every request from the City to research even more information and brought resources together. I met with anyone who called and spent countless hours networking with key state, county and private agencies who share commitment to this project all up and down the coast and across the state.

What I see now is that no progress has been made. The City Council is no closer to a plan to halt the negative effects of man on the land. The Planning Commission did set this as their number one goal and approved a zone change to allow removal of noxious weeds and provide a fire road (that has since been postponed indefinitely by the City of Gearhart). The Police Chief and the Fire Chief each took responsibility to publicly state the importance of action. That this alone was not enough baffles me.

The responsibility, which I believe should only reside with the Council, has now been passed to a committee made up of three residents of Seaside, one resident of Croatia and other members who have used social media, public forums, editorial commentary and letters to the City to show their complete disrespect for facts and to create public, personal attacks against me and City personnel. These same people have never reached out to even meet me let alone sit down with me to share ideas and concerns. Yet they feel entitled to vilify my motivations as purely selfish while offering no alternative plans.

Consequently, I have decided I can no longer be a member of the Sand Dune Committee for three reasons:

1. All members must be Gearhart residents or property owners; currently, they are not.
2. The goals and tasks for the committee changed from the first meeting to the second. This demonstrates lack of charter and direction.
3. Councilor Smith's vocal opposition and refusal to assure appropriate committee make up as well as his formation of a self-led subcommittee is in total contradiction to consensus creation.

It is beyond disappointing to set aside the desires of so many to work with the City of Gearhart and the massive accrual of information from numerous experts and agencies who all agree this effort is critical to prevent further deterioration of the fragile and unique Clatsop Plain. The task is daunting and long overdue. I have done my work. When the Council is ready to provide the Leadership required for the city, I will be there to support you.

Sincerely,

Margaret Marino
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