



West Weatherwax



The Point



East Weatherwax

WEATHERWAX NEWSLETTER

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Monthly Report

A special welcome to all of our New Supporters. We hope to see you soon.

March has been one of our busiest months yet; eventful, positive and a real boost for those who have been working so long on this project. We have won some battles, but the war wages on. (See "Special Topic" below.) The next few months will be critical to our long-term success. We need all of your continued support, both physically in helping with our many activities, and financially so that we can maintain our presence and if necessary fund a campaign for the Weatherwax issue on the ballot. Finally, we need you to have the patience to make it through this record-length newsletter!

Town Hall Meeting:

On March 3rd, the City held the first long-awaited Weatherwax Town Hall Meeting. Two presentations were made to the 114 people in attendance. Lillian Broadbent, with technical and photographic assistance by Richard Cherry, presented the OSCBG view of preserving the Weatherwax for future generations of people, wildlife, and the environment. Golf course manager Curt Zander, with assistance from the real estate community, presented his view of moving the golf course holes to the West Weatherwax wetlands and selling off all of the rest of the property for development. Public comment followed with 14 people speaking in favor of saving the Weatherwax. Many included their desire to also maintain the golf course by redesigning it in its current location, working it into an overall downtown revitalization. One person spoke in favor of moving the golf course holes to Weatherwax, selling the point for development, and leaving the rest alone. Nobody spoke in favor of or even acknowledged the presented idea of selling all of Weatherwax.

The majority of the current council seems willing to take this issue to a vote of the people. The sticking point is how the ballot would be worded. Another Town Hall Meeting is scheduled June 11th. We requested that the City have the golf course architect proceed with drawings of an improved golf course without relocation to the Weatherwax. We have also asked for city support in forming working groups to look at the real issue – downtown revitalization.

Audubon:

The Board of the Grays Harbor Audubon Society requested a presentation on Weatherwax from OSCBG. They were interested in learning more about the ecosystem, how and why it is being threatened, and how they could help. Marlene Penry made this presentation at their March 9th Board meeting. They were very supportive, provided some important tips, and we have made an important alliance. Thanks to them, OSCBG will have a Weatherwax booth at the Grays Harbor Shorebird Festival in May. They will also encourage birders to enjoy the Weatherwax and report back to us.

Razor Clam Festival:

With even more success than last year, we gained much positive attention with this event. Pictures of the Weatherwax played continuously on big screen monitors and our booth was busy with people interested in saving the Weatherwax. We gained new supporters and had a great increase in sales and contributions. Wilma Spike headed the effort this year and did an outstanding job! The responses from those who took tours of this incredible piece of property give everyone the energy to keep working.

Friends of Grays Harbor:

Friends of Grays Harbor (FOGH) is a local tax-exempt non-profit citizens' group dedicated to promoting a healthy Grays Harbor Estuary. They have been a supportive alliance of OSCBG almost from our beginning. This month they have supported us in two very special ways. We are a non-profit organization, but our tax-exempt paperwork is still in progress with the IRS. FOGH has become our sponsoring agent until our tax-exempt status comes through. This means your checks sent to us, but made out to FOGH with OSCBG noted in the memo field, are now tax-deductible. In addition, FOGH has provided a generous matching grant for donations! Thank you FOGH for this help and all that you have done to support our efforts. Also, thank you Gene Swygard for all the effort in getting the paperwork done for the IRS!

Current Activities

Membership Drive:

Within a week or two you will be receiving a membership mailing from us. We have put together a nice package of gifts available at different donation levels. Now that we have the FOGH matching grant, every dollar you give is worth twice as much to Weatherwax! Watch for it in the mail soon. Even if you normally get your information from us by email, this packet will be coming by postal mail so you can fill out the form and return your generous check.

Mayoral and Council Elections:

The Primary Election in March resulted in two pro-Weatherwax candidates getting the most votes in their respective races. The three May 20th elections for Mayor and City Council are crucial to the future direction of the City. We urge you to talk with the candidates and ask questions that are important to you. Read the candidates' statements and attend the forum April 23 at 6PM at the Convention Center and April 27 at 3PM at the Lions Club building. Tell your friends and neighbors what you learn. Then VOTE for the candidates who will best represent your position on important issues. If you are not registered to vote, you still have time! By mail, a registration form must be received in Olympia by April 19th. In person, you must register at the Montesano Courthouse by May 5th. Registration forms are available at the Library or online at <http://wei.secstate.wa.gov/WEI/GraysHarbor/Elections>, then select "Register to Vote."

How You Can Help

As we get into our busier season, we need "on call" tour guides. Training is available. If you can help with these tours on weekends, please contact Andy at oceanshorescbg@yahoo.com.

We will also soon need volunteers to help maintain the trails.

Please attend our meetings Wednesdays at the Ocean Shores Library at 3PM and/or send your comments, concerns and ideas to oceanshorescbg@yahoo.com.

Write Letters to the Editor of the North Coast News and The Daily World. Contact Mayor and Council Candidates. Contact City Council members and the City Manager. Attend and speak up at City Council meetings and Planning Commission meetings.

Special Topic

Golf Course Issues:

In the past, some people in town have tried to frame our goal to save the entire Weatherwax property in terms of our being anti-golf, or golf course vs. Weatherwax, an either/or proposition. We have maintained a consistent position that we are not against the golf course, however we are against golf course holes being put on the Weatherwax property, and the fact that no other options have ever been considered. In the past, Curt Zander, the golf course manager/lessee has been fairly quiet about all of this; the decision was in the City's hands not his, and he was just a victim "thrown into the middle of it." We knew it wasn't quite that innocent since the past two City Managers gave Mr. Zander carte blanche working with the contracted golf course architect on redesigning the holes onto Weatherwax, he would get potential profits from the move, etc. We have made attempts to stay in the information loop but were mostly ignored or excluded.

Mr. Zander has recently switched into high gear, actively promoting not only the move of golf course holes to Weatherwax but also full scale development of the property. We mentioned earlier his presentation at the Town Hall meeting. If you weren't there, you missed him donning his "target" t-shirt as he announced his change in direction, that he had previously stayed on the sidelines, but no more. Golf course aside, he felt duty bound to make sure the public had his version of the full picture. He showed a map with the entire Weatherwax property, except where his golf course holes would go, platted into single-family housing lots. He quoted a list of numbers provided by local realtors resulting in something like \$16-\$18 million dollars that the Weatherwax property is worth if developed into single-family residences. He then told the Council that if THEY did not put his option on the ballot, then he would gather the necessary petition signatures and HE would put it on the ballot.

It is unclear what suddenly made Mr. Zander become a spokesperson for the local real estate industry, but he indicated the people had the right to know how much money was involved and how much good it could do Ocean Shores. Through his own admission, he is not a real estate professional. What he presented was raw data that was not put in context of past and present real estate sales. For example: The Weatherwax Point, appraised and marketed for single-family houses, had no bids while it was for sale; hundreds of Ocean Shores lots and newly built houses are vacant and for sale, and they, unlike the Weatherwax property, have streets and utilities available to them; the City has never indicated any intent to sell all of Weatherwax. If we must consider selling all of the Weatherwax property for the money single-family housing will supposedly bring in, then must we not also consider selling all of the golf course property for the same reason? No. This huge sum of money sounds like a nice realtor's fantasy, but it is not likely. It is simply a shortsighted "fire sale, everything must go" viewpoint. And what price do you put on the loss of our last, best natural space? None, according to this plan.

Last week Mr. Zander approached OSCBG with what he seemed to think was a reasonable request for our membership list, because "our people should be informed" of his important information. We refused. We are not required to disclose our supporter information. Mr. Zander stated in a City Council meeting in late January that he wanted to get his message out to EVERYBODY, not just a few hundred people at a Town Hall meeting. Was he looking for a large free mailing list, or looking for a list of the "opposition" to try and convert? We don't know. He then asked for a list of our contributors, for what reason we do not know. We refused. You can be assured your personal information is safe with us.

Mr. Zander's recent change in behavior has forced us to also step up to the plate with arguments about why the City (you) should spend \$1.2 million dollars to move 5 golf course holes, and lose a 25 acre swath through the middle of the West Weatherwax forest in the process. We will analyze this in more detail in later months, but here are some starting points for you to consider.

We constantly hear how important a golf course is to attract visitors to town and that is why we must maintain an 18-hole golf course. We hear from Mr. Zander that the golf course brings in a tremendous amount of tourist dollars every year. Elusive tourist dollars are the only way to measure the economic worth of the golf course to the City (you)

because NO percentage of the revenues collected at the golf course comes back to the City. Although Mr. Zander leases the golf course from the City, he makes NO lease payments. If you are aware of the \$15,000/year he pays, that is a loan repayment to the City for financing the construction of his driving range. (And Mr. Zander recently received a 2-year suspension of those payments, which the City continues to make in the meantime.) His leasehold taxes go mainly to the state. He does pay sales and business taxes like any other business in town.

How can we determine how much tourist money the golf course really brings in? How do we know if people are coming to town just to play golf or if they play golf because they are in town? How do we know if they are in town and stay longer (thus generate hotel, restaurant, and retail income) to play golf? How do we know how many golfers are residents vs. tourists? We don't. All we can do is look at the reports provided to the City by Mr. Zander. An initial review of "individual paid rounds of golf" shows a 25% decrease since 2001. In 2007, that figure averages 29 rounds per day, about half 18-hole and half 9-hole. Mr. Zander stated in a recent newspaper article that about 80% of his business comes from outside the Grays Harbor area, but the data he reports to the City does not appear to be separated by resident and visitor rounds. At any rate, the numbers we have seen so far seem insignificant compared to the estimated 3 million annual visitors to the City.

If the City (you) pays \$1.2 million to move golf course holes to the Weatherwax, the golf course will be improved, prettier, better playing, and supposedly attract more golfers. It would also apparently attract more tournaments, but it will not be a PGA/LPGA course so they will be minor tournaments at best. How many more golfers over how long a period of time would it take to make back the \$1.2 million investment? The golf course green fees could increase after the improvements, but the City gets none of that revenue, the lessee does. The no revenue percentage, no rent contract runs about 11 more years plus an optional 5-year extension. Mr. Zander also has the option to sell his lease, and could do so for a higher price after he gets a FREE \$1.2 million course improvement.

You will be hearing more from us on this issue over the next few months. We are working diligently to have the City consider redesign of the existing downtown golf course holes into a creative downtown revitalization package. We think it is a good idea to give this less expensive improvement to the golf course lessee. Why? Because it means a TRIPLE WIN for the City, citizens, visitors, and wildlife: Saving the Weatherwax, Revitalizing the downtown area, AND Improving the golf course.

OSCBG has no possible monetary gain to make by preserving Weatherwax. We care only about this marvelous natural place remaining intact for current and future generations of people and wildlife in Ocean Shores. In one way, Weatherwax and the golf course are alike. Today, neither one is likely to be the sole reason to bring someone to visit or live here, but both are an added attraction, one more thing to do once people get here, and that adds value to the City of Ocean Shores. They need to co-exist peacefully for the good of the City.

*Thank you for your continued support and desire to preserve the
Weatherwax ecosystem.*