

OVI STATEMENT REGARDING SUSPENSION OF INCORPORATION EFFORT

Dear Oceanside Community,

About a year ago the OVI steering committee began looking into the possibility of creating an incorporated Oceanside Village. Our collective feeling was that the current system of land use management and governance has not protected what we value most about Oceanside, particularly in recent years.

All of us fell in love with Oceanside when we first saw it, the sweep of homes perched on a hillside amphitheater overlooking a stunning beach with offshore rocks populated with thousands of birds and other wildlife. The tunnel through Maxwell Point to an equally stunning beach on the other side. There are few places with such beauty, and we imagined living here, in community with others who also love this place. Some of us grew up knowing Oceanside, because our parents or grandparents fell in love with Oceanside. The members of the OVI Steering Committee are people who have stepped forward to help preserve Oceanside, not only through becoming elected board members of the Oceanside Neighborhood Association but also by serving on the boards of many of the special districts that provide services to the Oceanside community, or working for those districts and other organizations that serve the community.

The current system in Oceanside has accommodated the construction of ever larger homes in the village area. We also fear the future construction of outsized hotels that potentially damage the views and character of our village core. Residents of Oceanside would have little recourse to shape those hotels, and would likely be no more successful than Oceanside was when we objected as the Anchor, a beloved local tavern, was rebuilt into the Three Arch Inn.

Add to that, we observe that the county has never equitably invested in Oceanside, despite the tourism revenue generated here, and they likely never will. Instead, we fear that the county will continue to see Oceanside as a revenue generator for the needs of the rest of the county. We do not blame county leaders for this. It is their job to look out for the county. But as we see it, Oceanside has a choice about whether this situation continues. Instead, we envisioned a system in which the residents of Oceanside could elect representatives who make decisions about what is in the best interest of Oceanside, now and into the future. That is what incorporation would do.

In the past few days, after a summer of informational meetings, an open question and answer session, and a community survey, the OVI Steering Committee has been engaged in a deep review of the Village Incorporation proposal. Here is an enumeration of our reflections:

1. **Population:** Oregon law requires a minimum of 150 voters within a newly incorporated area. We have that, but with only a very slim margin given the OVI's decision to honor Radar Road's request for exclusion. There is, however, a set of difficulties that come with small cities concerning a depth on the bench to sustain city services. While the results of our survey suggested that there would be sufficient volunteers with skills and experience to staff key committees at the outset, we remain concerned about the long-term sustainability of small city governance.
2. **Economic Feasibility:** We have developed an Economic Feasibility Statement (**[LINK to statement](#)**). As we have revised this over the last year, our research has only reinforced the revenue projections and supported Oceanside Village's ability to fund the narrow range of proposed services.
3. **Land Use:** Tillamook County Community Development staff have refused to engage with us on what the state land use officials say would be the most sensible way to preserve current zoning in outer areas under county management. (**[LINK to online position paper](#)**.) We do not believe that the worst possible outcome—a reversion to rural zoning in the unincorporated parts of Greater Oceanside—is likely. We think this issue could be easily resolved after a successful incorporation vote. However, we acknowledge that moving forward involves a gamble on what Tillamook County will or will not be willing to accept concerning Greater Oceanside's zoning status.
4. **Roads:** We've documented that an incorporated Oceanside Village would easily spend more than four times the average annual funds than the county has spent to improve and maintain Oceanside roads, funds sourced from the Transient Lodging Tax (TLT). The prospective loss of the surplus TLT Oceanside generates has prompted Tillamook County Public Works to threaten the preemptive withdrawal of county status from all Village roads if we proceed. We did not anticipate this and doubt the County Commissioners would approve such a drastic step, but again, the county is going out of its way to force the Oceanside community to make that gamble, should we choose to pursue incorporation. (**[LINK to online position paper](#)**)
5. **Public Support:** In the past few weeks the OVI undertook a survey of the Oceanside Community, both inside and outside the proposed Village boundaries. The results demonstrated support for the village initiative from a solid majority of both full- and part-time Village residents who took the survey. Disappointingly, however, only a little more than half of the registered voters in the Village took part in the survey. Experience has shown that voters who become aware of an incorporation effort late in the process end up opposing it. Without more expressed support by an actual majority of registered voters, going forward will entail yet another gamble.

6. Oceanside cohesion: We are aware that the fabric of the Oceanside community can be fragile at times. Many of us have worked diligently in the last few months to address the often vitriolic divisions in our community. We have asked the community to understand that whatever perspective each of us may hold about the future of Oceanside, we all want to preserve what we love about our collective home.

We observe that Oceanside has been here before, not only during the controversy about the Anchor but also when it became clear that our former sewage system was inadequate to serve the current community, much less support future growth. Oceanside worked through those previous challenges, some more successfully than others, and we are a stronger community for it. We were hopeful that we could do the same today and collectively assess, without rancor, the merits of an incorporated Oceanside Village. But there is always a risk that others in the community would not strive to keep the conversation focused on ideas, or foreground community cohesion.

7. County Promises: After years of saying that it was not possible for there to be more than one residential Oceanside zone, county leaders have recently agreed to propose separate zoning for the village and outlying areas of Oceanside. We have not yet seen those proposals but are hopeful that they will be an improvement over existing zoning. In addition, Tillamook County Public Works has indicated they intend to pave in Oceanside this summer absent weather events or other emergencies. We are interested in seeing whether the county follows through.

And so, fellow Oceanside citizens, here is our decision. We are ending this round of the effort to incorporate an Oceanside Village. For all the above reasons, we conclude that now is not the time.

Making this decision has been a struggle; it has taken us several days. In fact, we drafted two statements, this one that you are reading and another one documenting the opposite decision.

We observe that many communities, both in Oregon and other states, have engaged in multiple incorporation efforts before they succeed. We believe that in the long run the fate of Oceanside should be in the hands of Oceansiders. We feel that our efforts have demonstrated the viability, the advantages, and the promise for the future of an incorporated Oceanside. We fear that the county's current promises won't address the underlying and abiding problems which lead to this and several previous incorporation efforts. We anticipate there may be future incorporation efforts to address the issues facing our community, and hope that those will be supported by all of Oceanside. When Oceansiders choose to renew this effort, we know we have created solidly researched proposals to support their effort.

We want to sincerely thank everyone who put serious time and effort into evaluating the merits of our proposal and demonstrated their faith in it along the way. Oceanside is a special place because of the people here, and we were excited to see how forming our own new city would unleash the potential we represent.

Thank you all.

Sincerely,

The members of the Oceanside Village Initiative Steering Committee