



Staff Report

For City Council Meeting - 12/1/2021

Subject - Ordinances/Resolutions - Resolution #965 Gearhart Zip Code Request

Synopsis: The Council opted for further research regarding the pursuit of a new zip code for Gearhart residents. The unknowns were stated; What happens to the Gearhart Post Office? What happens to residents receiving street delivery from Seaside? Would a new zip code impact either of these items, or more? Councilor Warren's report is attached.

Council Options:

- 1) Resolve to pursue an individual zip code with USPS via the attached resolution;
- 2) Make changes, resolving to approve the attached resolution as amended;
- 3) Do nothing. (table for further discussion)

Recommended Motion: Staff has no recommendation regarding Resolution #965.

Legal Analysis: The last attachment outlines USPS' process to request a zip code.

Financial Analysis: There will be a financial impact due to staff time changing water account mailing addresses and the City's mailing address with all applicable vendors and organizations.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be "Chad Sweet". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Chad Sweet

Zip Code Due Diligence from Last Meeting

Brent Warren <councilorwarren@cityofgearhart.com>
To: Krysti Ficker <krysti@cityofgearhart.com>
Cc: Paulina Cockrum <mayorcockrum@cityofgearhart.com>

Tue, Nov 23, 2021 at 1:26 PM

Report to City Council

November 19, 2021

At the November 3, 2021 council meeting, additional detail regarding Gearhart's pursuit of its own zip code was requested. The following is a summary of findings:

The City of Gearhart Post Office became a contract satellite office of Seaside Post Office in 1961. According to print media at the time, the change was made as a cost saving measure; however, the US Postal Service agreed that Gearhart would continue to receive mail addressed to "Gearhart, Oregon".

In 1964, the US Postal Service implemented geographic Zip Codes to expedite mail sorting and delivery throughout the United States. (It is still unclear whether Gearhart was ever assigned its own Zip Code. A few residents seem to recall it but I could not find any official documentation to that effect.)

It has been stated that the City of Gearhart has explored the possibility of obtaining its own unique Zip Code on several previous occasions. From what I am able to determine, the city performed some preliminary research and determined that the US Postal Service is a large bureaucratic institution, the process to obtain a unique Zip Code is complicated, and there have been few documented cases of success stories of a community being granted a new Zip Code. As far as I am able to determine, Gearhart has never made a formal request and has never solicited assistance from its Congressional delegation to achieve this goal.

It has also been said that Gearhart does not have sufficient population to warrant its own Zip Code. The research below reveals this view is not accurate:

- Arch Cape (population 205) has a contract post office with its own unique Zip Code 97102. Mail staging and delivery is done by Cannon Beach 97110 by USPS employees.
- Hammond, Oregon (population 1,400) is an unincorporated neighborhood within the City of Warrenton and has its own Zip Code 97121. Hammond PO Boxes are and Hammond Street Delivery is served by USPS personnel from Warrenton 97146. (Warrenton has a total population of 5,000, which includes Hammond.)
- Manzanita (population 393) has its own Zip Code 97130 and is serviced by Nehalem (population 355) 97131.
- Tolovana Park (population 400) has its own 97145 Zip Code and is a contract post office within the Tolovana Park Store. Tolovana Park is served by the USPS Post Office in Cannon Beach 97110.

Gearhart (population 1,800) has a contract post office that shares the same Zip Code with Seaside (population 6,700). Seaside 97138 is the host USPS for Gearhart's Contract post office. With the same shared zip code for both home delivery routes and PO Boxes it creates a scenario for confusion and misdirected letters and packages at both post offices. Most, but not all, confusion centers around numbered and lettered streets. Our Gearhart PO staff estimates an average of a dozen misdirected pieces of mail per day. Due to its larger population and mail volume, Seaside misdirected mail could easily be double that figure. Remember each misdirected piece of mail requires manual human intervention to research and solve.

I also consulted with a Gearhart UPS delivery driver and 2 Fed Ex delivery people. All agreed that Gearhart having a shared Zip Code with Seaside causes a significant number of delivery issues. The USPS national Zip Code database is used by virtually all mail order/internet pharmacies, all online stores such as Amazon, EBay and others. Even when "Gearhart" is manually entered, the computer systems frequently change the city name back to "Seaside". The best-case scenario involves manual research, delays, and the imposition of additional research and re-delivery fees. Worst case is the package or mail gets returned to sender as undeliverable. The problem grows larger as online shopping increases.

Some have heard that USPS mail carriers are not allowed to work outside of their own Zip Code area and consequently have raised concerns that Gearhart obtaining a separate Zip Code would have "unintended consequences" such as the termination of street delivery in our city. I had extensive telephone conversations with both the recently retired Seaside Postmaster and the current interim Seaside Postmaster. Both assured me that it is common for host post offices to work in neighboring Zip Code areas and that Gearhart obtaining its own Zip Code would have absolutely no impact on the service current home deliveries received. Both acknowledged that with Gearhart's recent growth, it warranted splitting its street delivery route into two and assigning a second mail carrier. Both concurred that the shared Zip Code causes deliver issues and wasted research time and were anxious for Gearhart to initiate the process. I attempted to contact the regional USPS manager in Portland, but was told that they did not speak to USPS customers and I could not be provided with their phone number or email address.

SUMMARY:

The shared zip code is a problem. It is likely many are unaware of it due to the extra effort postal and private delivery workers make behind the scenes. Worker time costs us money. Delays and returns cost us all money. As more medications are purchased online, some of the delays and returns have potential life-threatening consequences.

Over half of Gearhart gets its mail directly delivered to residences. There is no reason to expect this would change as a result of changing our Zip Code. Having an independent Zip Code from the City of Seaside should not preclude the USPS from continuing to deliver our mail as the City of Gearhart host post office.

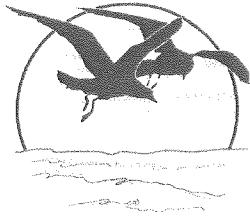
Getting our own Zip Code will not solve every issue such as having an insufficient number of PO Boxes. But in my opinion, it is an incremental improvement for all of our residents.

We have the political horsepower in Congressperson Bonamici and Senators Wyden and Merkley to see that it happens in the right way.

Thank you for your consideration.

Brent Warren

[Quoted text hidden]



CITY OF GEARHART

RESOLUTION NO. 965

THE CITY OF GEARHART MAKES THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION:

WHEREAS, the City of Gearhart is a growing independent municipality in Clatsop County Oregon, with an estimated population of 1,800;

WHEREAS, the City of Gearhart has its own US Postal Service (USPS) Contract Office, it shares its 97138 zip code with the City of Seaside, its neighbor to the south containing a population of approximately 6,700;

WHEREAS, many online sites utilize the USPS national zip code database and do not allow overriding the default city name based on the zip code;

WHEREAS, Gearhart and Seaside have many street names that are identical or similar, mail is frequently misdirected to the wrong city, requiring costly research, redirection, and delays. Some of these delays could impact mail-order prescriptions and other necessary medical supplies;

WHEREAS, some delivery companies such as FedEx and Amazon incorrectly notify purchasers that their package may be picked up at the Seaside Post Office, causing needless trips and phone calls;

WHEREAS, some of the more economical insurance companies use zip code as part of their underwriting process, some Gearhart homeowners have been denied homeowners insurance or may have paid higher premiums because the distance to Seaside was mistakenly considered too far from their residence;

WHEREAS, many nearby coastal cities and communities have populations considerably smaller than Gearhart, they have been assigned their own unique and individual zip code (See attached Exhibit A);

NOW, THEREFORE the City of Gearhart requests the United States Postal Service (USPS) to review assignment of zip code 97139 or another zip code unique to our city.

This Resolution was passed by the City Council of the City of Gearhart this _____ day of _____ 2021.

YEAS: _____

NAYS: _____

ABSENT: _____

ABSTAIN: _____

Signed and approved by the Mayor of the City of Gearhart this _____ day of _____ 2021.

Paulina Cockrum, Mayor

ATTESTED BY:

Chad Sweet, City Administrator

EXHIBIT A

Coastal Cities within 25 miles of Seaside

Zip ∨ ^	City ∨ ^	County ∨ ^	St ∨ ^	Population
<u>97016</u>	CLATSKANIE	COLUMBIA	OR	1,750
<u>97064</u>	VERNONIA	COLUMBIA	OR	1,850
<u>97102</u>	ARCH CAPE	CLATSOP	OR	205
<u>97103</u>	ASTORIA	CLATSOP	OR	9,900
<u>97110</u>	CANNON BEACH	CLATSOP	OR	1,500
<u>97121</u>	HAMMOND	CLATSOP	OR	1,400
<u>97130</u>	MANZANITA	TILLAMOOK	OR	393
<u>97131</u>	NEHALEM	TILLAMOOK	OR	355
<u>97138</u>	SEASIDE	CLATSOP	OR	6,700
<u>97144</u>	TIMBER	WASHINGTON	OR	131
<u>97145</u>	TOLOVANA PARK	CLATSOP	OR	1,490
<u>97146</u>	WARRENTON	CLATSOP	OR	5,000
<u>97147</u>	WHEELER	TILLAMOOK	OR	357
<u>98643</u>	ROSBURG	WAHAKIAKUM	WA	320

USPS Zip Code Request Process

Conduct "ZIP Code Boundary Review"

Submit rationale and justification in writing to our USPS District Manager to identify reasonable accommodation for our own "unique" zip code exists.

Steps during the approval process include: evaluate all costs, benefits, issues with potential solutions, "quantify specific operational impacts and feasibility"; meet with proponents to discuss issues/alternatives 60 days for DM final decision

APPROVAL = continue up "the chain"...

*Additional steps include a formal survey of all customers affected by proposed change; Simple Majority = approval [some conduct this survey FIRST via petition so data is ready]

REJECTION = written notification with specific justification based on analysis results; advised of appeal process

Appeal to Manager of Delivery at USPS Headquarters

Operations Specialist will determine; "Was reasonable accommodation made?" 60 days for final appeal decision

APPROVAL = up the chain/50% survey majority needed

REJECTION = request assistance from Congress; need the petition and/or survey majority for consideration

What is "The Chain"?

The chain of command for new zip code approval is as follows:

START - District Manager approval

Manager of Operations Programs approval

Manager of Processing and Distribution approval

District Manager of Customer Service and Sales approval

Area (Regional) Office approval

Headquarters' Address Management System (AMS)
approval

FINISH - New ZIP Code!