

City unveils plans for new RV park identity ... 'Lighthouse Shores'

December 22, 2019



Crescent City is home to three RV parks. Because the city is the owner of one of them - Shoreline RV Campground – public officials are developing a strategy to make it stand out.

Holly Wendt, the city's recreation director, unveiled plans Dec. 2 to evolve the park's identity into a resort, starting with changing its name to Lighthouse Shores.

"At first, when I came, on it didn't seem that big a concern," Wendt told Crescent City Council members about the local park's name. "But in researching RV parks, we found there's a Shoreline RV Park 80 miles away in Humboldt County.

"It really became aware to me, because people have booked at the wrong place. A Google search of 'Shoreline RV Park' will turn up the Humboldt County one first, because its link is managed by a larger company."

Wendt has met with Crescent City's ad hoc Shoreline RV Park committee twice in the past five months.

Crescent City received a state land grant in 1963 and acquired various tidelands and submerged lands, including the property where Shoreline RV Park currently sits just south where U.S. Highway 101 merges back into two-way lanes.

The RV park was built in 1971 and leased for more than 30 years to a third party to operate.

The city reestablished control and in 2015 received an Economic Development Agency grant that paid for construction and a makeover. The number of spaces was reduced from 192 to 94, the layout amended, and upgrades implemented for utilities and amenities.

"That makes it one of the nicest RV parks in the city," said Wendt, "with its voltage of pedestals, wi-fi access, cable hookups and location on the water. And the city has been working on improving customer experience since 2015."

She said the number of people staying at the RV park during the summer has increased steadily since 2017. It's often completely booked come July.

Her first priority to address was the park's reputation with visitors. Looking at business directory crowdsource online services such as Yelp and TripAdvisor, Wendt discovered comments about Shoreline going back to 2010 about camper experiences which, she said "really don't depict what it's currently like when people come and stay with us there."

"It's really hard to bring it up to a five-star experience when it still has three-star ratings from several years ago."

Next, she researched names. "We looked at a lot of logos, and a lot of ideas of what could we possibly do to link the name and the RV park to the city. And one of the things that stands out is, it's one of the only places you can be right on the water and see the lighthouse," Wendt said.

"There is not another Lighthouse Shores in the U.S., except in Texas."

City Council members briefly weighed alternative names, such as Elk Creek and Beachfront Park, but eventually went with the committee's suggestion of Lighthouse Shores RV Park. They also unanimously approved hiring a graphic designer to develop a logo that incorporates the theme of the city's street signs.

Wendt said the ad-hoc committee continues to work on infrastructure, marketing and the location's ambiance.

One way to address those issues was to provide new online booking services. The committee recommended, and the council unanimously approved, going with Campspot for software to allow campers to make online reservations.

"Campspot's online bookings stands out for its simplicity. It works really great for a camper driving through who just got reception and wants to stay someplace," Wendt said.

Additionally, the committee proposed that the RV park implement an application process for month-long stays. “These were modeled after similar systems found at KOAs and other RV parks, and include a contract and guidelines to visitors about the upkeep of their spaces,” Wendt said.

The committee’s priority was improving the site’s amenities. For example, Wendt said, the park has a laundry room but it doesn’t sell soap.

Other park upgrades considered were picnic tables and fire pits, and addressing safety concerns like fencing and motion-detection lights.

Wendt added that the main office needed repairs, such as to the floor and outside windward walls, to the tune of \$15,000.

Crescent City Mayor Blake Inscore, meanwhile, looked at the big picture, saying Shoreline RV Park is one of the city’s few moneymakers. He said the park was able to generate enough revenue to repay a \$200,000 loan from the city’s general fund. He recommended that city staff look well beyond a \$15,000 upgrade to the park’s main building.

“I think that if we’re going to re-brand the park with a new name and a new logo, we need to make a commitment to go all-in and not adjust it again,” Inscore said.

“If our goal is to be Lighthouse Shores Resort and Campground, we should go all-in right now. We need to be who we want to be, even if there’s a certain amount of aspirational to that.”