

# Local

## Public Works Advisory Committee discusses water facilities plan



Gina K. Swartz / The Baker County Press

L-R: The Public Works Advisory Committee—Michelle Owen, Doug Schwinn, Gary Carter, Jim Bruce, John Wickert and Jim Thomas.

**BY GINA K. SWARTZ**  
Gina@TheBakerCountyPress.com

A meeting with the Public Works Advisory Committee was held Thursday January 21, 2016 to discuss the water facilities Plan.

In attendance were Michelle Owen, Public Works Director, Doug Schwinn, City Engineer, Committee Chairman Gary Carter, committee members Jim Bruce, John Wickert and Council representative Jim Thomas.

Not present at the meeting were committee members Myrna Morgan, Allen McDaniel and Milo Pope, who has resigned from the committee.

The meeting began by reviewing minutes from November 5, 2015 meeting with all in agreement to approve those minutes.

The main focus of the meeting was the Water Facilities Plan.

This plan was put together by Murray, Smith & Associates based out of Boise, ID. The document they put together, which is available on the City's website, was a collaboration with Baker City and as City Engineer Doug Schwinn explained, "The plan has been through a lot of discussions and revisions."

The plan outlined the existing system addressing items such as our location and climate, our watershed and the service area, water requirements based on historical production and use, historical population including per capita demands and what

population projections and demand projections may be in the future, offering suggestions.

Other areas addressed in the document include an analysis of our current system, a groundwater capacity expansion evaluation, water quality and regulations, a capital improvement plan and financial summary.

Baker City's current system is identified in the plan as being 77 miles of distribution pipe serving our just under 10,000 citizens with nearly 4,600 connections.

It is noted that the City primarily receives its water supply from the 10,000-acre watershed located 10 miles west of town within the Elkhorn Mountains.

Water is collected from 13 intakes mostly by gravity and piped to the UV facility and reservoir. The City currently has one active groundwater well.

In a five-year plan another is suggested and a third is proposed for a 20-year plan. Although the water demands will not grow significantly based on projections, a .03% increase is anticipated that will add another 600 users to the service area.

The water demands increase by at or less than 1% for both five- and 20-year estimates. The system analysis revealed that while the city can adequately meet the MMD (maximum daily demand) and will easily be able to in the future there were concerns raised about the scenario of a major fire in our watershed which as

Owen pointed out could take time to get that groundwater back to the quality it needs to be at even with the new UV plant.

There is a lack of redundancy in the local system—adding another well, possibly a second would alleviate that concern.

The report also showed a few areas within the city where the water pressure is lower than it should be, nothing drastic just something that could be improved, especially in areas where fire hydrant connections for suppression are used. The City also has a number of old meters that occasionally need replaced.

New homes built or subdivisions created are being fitted with radio read meters, so basically a city worker can point a "reader" at the home and get the usage read rather than having to physically read the meter.

There are both positive and negative feelings about this system.

For the City, the negative being the cost but the positive newer, more accurate, easier to read meters but for many citizens there is question about accuracy of such a system.

Old meters that have to be replaced, for whatever reason are not being replaced with radio read meters, they are the same standard meters.

Radio read meters are expensive. It was mentioned that in the future the radio read meters would not even require city staff to drive by the home for a

read the information would be transmitted to City Hall though a special software program that would also allow daily monitoring.

If for example, there was a leak in the pipe providing water to a home it could be detected almost immediately. Whereas now with a bi-monthly billing system leaks are often not discovered for several months.

The Committee discussed the pros and cons of switching to monthly billing with Owen stating, "Often people wait to pay that water bill until the next one comes out and then it is really difficult to pay them both, maybe billing monthly would alleviate that to some degree."

There was also mention of a rate increase, although not the lowest in Oregon, Baker City is still among one of the lowest.

Owen acknowledges that no one wants to see their bill go up but unfortunately the cost to pay for improvement has to come from somewhere.

"We had a huge outcry just last year when we raised the rates to help pay for the UV treatment facility," she said.

The Committee agreed that this Water Facilities Plan was a good direction for Baker City to go and agreed that this plan should be presented to the City Council for adoption.

Owen informed the committee that it had to first be sent to the state for approval and advised if there were any major changes she would inform them before presenting it to Council.

## League of Oregon Cities meets in Prairie City

**BY EILEEN DRIVER**  
Eileen@TheBakerCountyPress.com

The League of Oregon Cities Eastern Oregon Region 8 Small Cities Support Network meeting was held on Thursday, January 21 from 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the Prairie City Strawberry Grange located at 204 N McHalley in Prairie City, Oregon.

This quarter's meeting was focused on Code Enforcement in small cities with quest Speaker Nikki Lesich, CEP, Code Enforcement Officer, City Attorney's Office, the Dalles, Oregon. Due to weather and road conditions Nikki was delayed getting to the meeting so the agenda was rearranged putting her presentation at the end of the meeting rather than the beginning. Each city representative present introduced themselves and gave a short update on what's happening in their city. The host city of Prairie City's Mayor Jim Hamsher opened the meeting with, "We welcome you and want to thank you all for making the trip thru the snow to Prairie City."

Present with him from Prairie City was Councilor/Mayor ProTem Georgia Patterson, City Recorder Taci Philbrook, and Public Works Director Chris Camarena. It was reported by Chris Camarena that they are currently working on a sewer repair and maintenance project to get the cities infrastructure in good condition.

The city of Monument was represented by City Recorder Dorothy Jordan and City Councillors Carrie Ussery and Bob Yokawa. They reported working with Portland State University on a new Income Levels Survey and are now reeligible for grants from which they were excluded last year. They are now working toward a sewer update project.

City Councillor Louis Provencher was present for John Day and had this to report, fire station construction is on schedule and expected to be completed in the spring. Also a city bike lane project is underway and they are working on updating their employment applications to comply with new state laws and they have finished the update on their employee manuals.

Long time City Manager Peggy Gray is planning to retire in July and the City will soon be posting that position and looking for qualified applicants to fill the position. Seneca City Manager Josh Walker stated that Seneca had also worked on a new Income Level Study with PSU and are also glad to report that they are now once again qualified for block grants as well and are working on securing funding for their sewer project. They have six volunteers going thru firefighter training and are working on updating their fire department and equipment so they can reopen their fire station.

Roberta Vanderwahl, Nyssa City Manager, accompanied by former Mayor Sue Walker, reported on Nyssa's water treatment project including the plant and total overhaul of hydrants and water lines. She also told of her trip to Salem to give the small cities perspective to Capitol Hill, on the proposed minimum wage increase.

She stated, "I was glad of the opportunity to have our views listened to, but I don't believe it will change their minds in any way."

Former City Councillor, now Planning Commissioner for the City of Sumpter LeAnn Wolf was on hand to report for Sumpter. She told how the sewer project had to be put on hold due to the weather but will start again as soon as possible. They are also working on Planning education and enforcement and the revamping of their charter.

Wolf explained, "Our charter calls for all our legal publications to be posted in the New York Times since they had so many absentee mine owners from the east. It's time to change that."

Huntington was represented by President of the Council Eileen Driver and Deputy City Recorder Shellie Nash. They reported that Huntington has a Dispensary opening in February and has had a flood of requests for commercial lands available. Which are dwindling fast. The sewer project is continuing on schedule and they are currently working on a Business License ordinance.

They also reminded those present of the Mayor's Luncheon being held in Huntington on Thursday January, 28th.

Also present was Ann Mitchell of the Rural Development Initiative, Andy Gehrke of Holiday Engineering, Mike Berry and Shawn Mallory of ODOT Ontario, David Wildman of Anderson Perry Engineering and Randy Jones of RSS DEQ La Grande.

After a delicious lunch of beef or chicken tacos, Nikki Lesich arrived and gave the group valuable information on Ordinance enforcement. The most important can be summed up in the following quote, "In my time as Mayor half the town hated me and half did not. In my position in Code Enforcement the whole town hates me and you have to not care what they think."

First is to have definitive Ordinances to enforce and the right person to enforce them with a firm but empathetic manner. Half hearted enforcement without follow thru will not get the job done. She also handed out information on the Oregon Code Enforcement Association and a copy of their newsletter "The Enforcer."

The next quarter's meeting will be a joint regional meeting with all LOC Member Cities, large and small, held in John Day on May 19th at 11:30 a.m. Guest speaker Craig Honeyman will update on what's happening in Salem.

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A holey pair of jeans.  
You're everything I ever wanted.  
And everything I need.  
Love, me.

## School exclusion date is February 17

February 17 is School Exclusion Day, and the Oregon Immunization Program is reminding parents that children will not be able to attend school or child care starting that day if their records on file show missing immunizations—OR parents provide an exemption.

Parents of children with old exemptions on file signed before March 2014 will need to submit updated documentation. If the child has received the vaccines, the parent needs to turn in the immunization dates to the school.

If the parent wants a nonmedical exemption, the parent needs to turn in a Vaccine Education Certificate showing that they've received education about vaccines, either from a health care practitioner or from the online vaccine education module.

The parent also needs to sign a new Certificate of Immunization Status.

More information about exemptions can be found at the division's vaccine exemption website at www.healthoregon.org/vaccineexemption.