

ROADS ...

Continued from A-1

“You can argue more or less,” Brandes said. “How much money do we need to provide a reasonable cushion, should the wheels fall off?”

But past experience may provide a guide. The recent

replacement of lower Sucker Creek Bridge, according to Brandes, cost \$3 million.

In that case, the county was able to access state funds that paid for the project. But, he said, outside funding is not always available, or available in sufficient amounts.

FEMA funding is often cited as the county’s fallback in case of emergency. But FEMA

cannot be counted on to cover 100 percent of costs in the case of a disaster, said Brandes. And FEMA funding is slow. Senior administrative supervisor Laurie Hansen, responsible for managing and developing the Public Works budget, said it usually takes two to three years to receive those funds. In the meantime, immediate needs must be met.

“After the 1996 flood,” said

Brandes, “we spent \$1 million just in the first month. You start getting disasters at that level; you can go through a whole lot of money in a hurry.”

“Our budget is about the same as it was 10 years ago, but costs have gone up by about 60 percent.

Ten years ago, Brandes said, Public Works was able to “reinvigorate” 50 miles of county

roads a year, in a process referred to as chip sealing. Now his department can only treat 25 miles every other year, a quarter as much as before.

“I could go out tomorrow,” he added, “and spend probably \$2 million getting caught up on chip sealing, if I had the money.”

CARS ...

Continued from A-1

According to Hoke, scrap metal runs for \$10 a ton. If Jerry’s isn’t going to make money off the vehicle’s scrap, they won’t retrieve it, and the vehicle will sit on the side of the road until either the owner claims it or has it towed. If it’s not worth it, it’s not going anywhere.

In short, there are several players involved who all have their reasons to or not to take care of an abandoned vehicle. First is the owner, or in some cases the thief, who will wreck the vehicle and either abandon it or get it towed.

IVFD’s main concern is safety, so they will make sure the vehicle isn’t a hazard to the road or environment. If it’s safe, they’ll leave it or try and find the owner to recoup what it cost to take care of the incident.

Jerry’s Towing gets the salvage rights for abandoned vehicles, but sometimes the cost to tow outweighs what Jerry’s will make off scrap metal. In that case, it’s actually not worth the time.

At the root of the issue, along with other issues in the Valley, is the lack of law enforcement. According to Hoke, the available police officers have to prioritize their calls.

“OSP [Oregon State Police] is subsidizing Josephine County, and so they get a little tired of continuing to subsidize,” Hoke said. “They only take high-serious calls.”

To explain the complexity of the issue, Hoke used a drunk driver as an example--what he said many of the abandoned vehicle cases involve.

“Here we’ve got this drunk guy, wrecks his car, cops aren’t responding--and we’re not gonna stay there all day and babysit this guy--and we leave and he walks out in traffic and he gets hit,” Hoke said. “Then who’s responsible? We left him knowing

that he was drunk, but he refused treatment, law enforcement’s not coming--who’s responsible for him?”

Hoke said IVFD handles burned cars every couple of months, but the majority of the abandoned vehicles are wrecks from drivers driving under the influence (DUI). If they stay, they know a DUI arrest is coming. Instead, the drivers will take all registration and identifying information from the vehicle and leave it because police have to be able to put a DUI driver behind the wheel.

Technically, if the police find out who’s vehicle it is and trace it back to them, the driver can say it was stolen and law enforcement will have a hard time proving that wrong.

Hoke stressed that IVFD is not the police.

“We don’t have any authority, we don’t have any police powers,” Hoke said. “We have a great staging policy. There are types of calls we just don’t go to until the scene is secure, if that means we gotta wait an hour and a half.”

Last year when an active shooter was threatening McGrew’s restaurant, IVFD showed up long before law enforcement, but were helpless.

“Everybody’s barricaded in the building, we got an active shooter outside the building, and it was probably an hour before OSP got there and another hour for them to clear the scene,” Hoke said. “And I got ambulances standing by, but we don’t know if we got a victim or 10 victims. We don’t know if we have an Orlando going on. All we can do is wait.”

It’s a cycle with no foreseeable solution, so for now residents will have to get used to abandoned vehicles along Redwood Highway and throughout the Valley.

“It sucks,” Hoke said. “It’s a huge problem.”

Local students make Honor Roll at Oregon State University

CORVALLIS, Ore. – Names of students who have made the Scholastic Honor Roll Spring term have been announced by Oregon State University.

3.5 or Better: Maelagh E. Baker, Junior, Environmental Sciences; Ivan S. Yates, Senior, Biology

Adult softball is on Tuesday and Thursday evenings - three games a night starting at 6, 7:30 and 9 p.m.

June 21
6 - Multiple Scoregasms vs. V Haunts
7:30 - Diamond Devils vs. Balls Out
9 - Radio Shack vs. Tree House

June 23
6 - IV Haunts vs. Tree House
7:30 - Radio Shack vs. J4J
9 - Diamond Devils vs. Good Earth

Illinois Valley News

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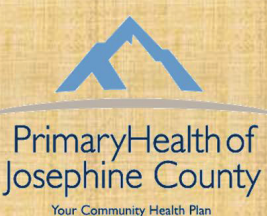
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