

MAYOR'S CORNER

Thanks to all of you who attended the special information meeting on June 5 in the Community Hall. There were 55 people in attendance. Those attending included some out of town folks, all but one family represented are owners of Butte Falls town property. The purpose of the meeting was to talk about the proposed ordinance establishing a Butte Falls Water Commission and to talk to the community about our water system needs and how to upgrade. Richard Nored from the HGE Engineering firm in Coos Bay made a presentation and answered questions. Copies of the HGE Engineering Study completed in 1993 are available at the City Hall. They may be checked out for you to read.

Butte Falls' water distribution system is old and full of leaks, and in need of replacement, not continued costly repairs. If we raise our water rates from the \$14 we pay now to the state average of \$30, we would be eligible for a 50% grant to pay for the system replacement. Rural Development, a federal agency (formerly Farmers Home Administration), would provide us with a loan and a 50% grant. Copies of the facts and figures were provided at the meeting. Anyone who was not able to attend the meeting may pick up this info at City Hall. If the town had proceeded in 1993 to obtain a grant and loan to replace the system, we could have obtained a 75% grant. Today, no more than 50% is available, and the future may see no grant dollars available. If we wait to proceed with this, the entire cost may be an obligation to our residents.

We did not have a quorum for our regular council meeting on June 12. A special council meeting was held Thursday, June 19, following the Public Hearing of the 1997-98 budget. At the meeting, *the council voted favorably on the ordinance establishing the Water Commission.* Secondly, after much discussion, the council voted to create an ordinance raising the water rates to the state averages, thus allowing us to be eligible for the Rural Development grant dollars. That evening, I was not certain if this raise had to be effective immediately. The GOOD NEWS is that the raise may be in increments. The 97-98 public works budget requires at least an eight dollar increase in order to meet the needs for the year beginning July 1, 1997. Another increase can be enacted later, and a final increase after completion of the project. An ordinance establishing these rules and regulations will be written, posted for 30 days and then voted on by the council. We should have the ordinance written in time for council review at the July 10 council meeting.

Other good news that I have learned is that we can set a "Minimum rate" which would allow the low volume water users to pay a lower rate. We will include this in our proposed ordinance establishing the new rates. The process of grant application, approval, constructions, etc. could take up to two years. The proposed project includes replacing the water distribution system lines, building a new 500,000 gallon reservoir, installing new water hydrants on every street corner and installing all the necessary water meters.

The Town of Butte Falls currently has a fire rating code of "7". With the new enlarged and looped water system lines and new hydrants, the class code may be lowered to "6". This could mean a reduction in your

fire insurance rates. Call your insurance company and ask. At the June 5 meeting, our Fire Chief, Hugh Simpson, was asked if the fact that our fire department was a "Volunteer" fire department would make a difference in the rating. Hugh has checked on this, and the answer is that being a "Volunteer" fire department does not count against you for the fire code ratings. In fact, the majority of the fire departments nationally are volunteer fire departments. Talk with Hugh for more information.

Bill Tucker had good news to report at the June 19 meeting. Superior Lumber company is donating land to us for the proposed water bottling plant. Thanks to a current grant, we have an architect working on the site plans. Talk to Bill for more details. A resident questioned at the council meeting if the water rate increase is related to the water bottling plans. I assure to you that it is NOT. We have an old archaic system that needs to be replaced. We are spending more and more dollars each year repairing an old system. We would need to replace our old lines, install water meters and replace old hydrants even if we were to buy water from Medford.

Fortunately, we have our Ginger Springs water for our town use. Some interested folks have been working for several years on making the dream of a water bottling plant come true. When this someday happens, it will mean revenue to the city by selling our surplus water to the water bottling company. Bill Tucker can answer more questions on this subject for you.

The council also gave their blessing to proceed with a "Falls Committee". A group of interested persons met recently to discuss the concept of a "Butte Falls Park" at the Falls on Butte Creek. This park would be a place for viewing fish traveling upstream and a location for natural resource education. I plan to contact the property owners representative as soon as possible to see if land acquisition is a possibility. If so, the Falls Committee will meet July 7 at 10:00 a.m. at the Butte Falls Ranger Station office. You may call city hall to confirm the meeting. Anyone who is interested, but not able to attend, call Lori at the City Hall for a copy of meeting notes.

We are recruiting for a new council member. Alvin Thompson is off to Alaska again and has resigned. The opening is posted, and a new member will be selected at the July meeting.

Anyone interested in being on the Water Commission may complete an application and leave it at the City Hall. The membership may be from 5 to 7, two of which may be non-town residents similar to the Planning Commission membership.

A special thanks to our Budget Officer, Melissa Owens, and all our budget committee members who met weekly until the task of completing the 97-98 budget was accomplished. The Budget Committee included, the council members plus the following residents: Barry Edwards, Diane Holm, Dan Murphy, Julie Freeman, Michelle Barnett and Pam Waddell. A special thanks to our alternate Ed Lux who faithfully attended all meetings and joined us when we needed a quorum.

Thanks to all of you for your support. These are challenging times. Let's continue to work together to maintain this wonderful place we live.

Sara Beck, Mayor