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He continued, "But we have nobody here who has direct interest in operating that dam to a proper operation level. They're not paying attention to the low tide and the things they need to look at to get a good flush of the lake, and to maintain the fish population. You need a good negative tide and the water level to be as close to 8 feet as you can possibly get it, and then get a big flush. It's a real balance."

The resident also pointed out problems with debris.

"Part of the deal is the amount of logs in the river," he said. "That doesn't allow the water to run and get a proper flush. If you don't get a proper flush, you can't maintain good quality."

City council members shared the residents' concerns, particularly when it comes to removing debris in the lake. The city has been asking for permission to clean up the area, but "It's falling on deaf ears," Mills said. "We're trying and trying to get it done. We're not asking for the state to do it, we're just asking for permission so we can do it. We can't get permission to get in there and clean it up."

"I feel like it's a liability," Councilor Duke Wells said. "We are telling

people about our great area to visit, and part of that is the canoeing down the outlet. We're not after money."

Councilor Robert Orr stated that the issue of Siltcoos was a priority, and that councilors and staff would be studying solutions in 2019. He also pointed out that they recently spoke with state representatives about the concerns and the issue is being looked at.

"I can't imagine doing anything without a lot more discussion and expert input," Councilor Sheldon Meyer said, going on to joke, "I don't know if anybody up here knows a 'dam' thing."

After discussing previous goals, Mills turned to a results survey that was distributed among city residents. The No. 1 issue that residents had was keeping roads clean and repaired.

Traditionally, road upkeep has been done strictly through volunteer work, but in a city council meeting following the planning session, a contract was signed with long-time city volunteer Richard Palmer.

The agreement, which agrees to pay Palmer an hourly rate as well as reimbursing him for equipment use, lays out a framework on how the city should handle road repair

issue.

Another issue of concern to city residents was passing a small property tax to ensure that the city remains solvent, with survey members expressing support for the idea.

"That's not how the ballot turned out," Mills said when she read the comments.

In November, the city attempted to pass a temporary local option tax to ensure that the state's shared revenue funds can still be diverted to the city. The tax was voted down, 645 to 244.

The ramifications of the "no" vote is still being studied by the city as staff and the council attempt to answer if they can still even remain financially viable — or be forced to disincorporate. They are reaching out to state representatives for help and expect answers to be clearer in the coming months.

Finally, residents on the survey asked for better communication from the city with its residents.

"We have a unique situation," Mills said. "We don't have our own newspaper, we don't have our own radio station, we don't have our own TV station. How do you communicate with residents?"

She said that the city is looking into ways to communicate more fully with residents, either through

social media or other means.

There was one glaring issue with survey: Only nine people actually took it.

"Unfortunately, with only nine surveys returned, it doesn't give us a real sense of what the community is thinking," Orr said.

Wells shared his thoughts about the low turnout at a city council meeting later that night.

"We sent out a couple hundred of those," he said. "When we make decisions, those nine people have a little more say in what needs to be done for the city. It's an opportunity that's being missed. You throw out the septic issue or the marijuana issue, it's hard to get into the door here."

But otherwise, turnout and engagement is low.

"We had an opportunity to meet with our state Rep. Caddy McKeown and our state Sen. Arnie Roblan. It was pretty well advertised that we were going to have the meeting here, but there were about 10 people there," Wells continued. "It was a great opportunity for people to bend the ears of people who have the power to do stuff for our city. You need to be involved all the time if you want the city to run smooth."

When the city does get people

to get involved, especially when it comes to committees such as the Planning Commission, it can be difficult to get people involved.

"The biggest problem for the planning commission is keeping members, and secondly members showing up when they do meet," Mills said. "They have to have a quorum to do business."

At the end of the meeting, an audience member questioned what the city was doing to bring more money in through growing businesses and building new housing.

"The city's comprehensive plan was developed to prohibit development, prohibit commercial development and to decrease growth," Mills said. "That's the way it was written and voted on by the people. I don't know what would happen now. Things do change. But that is the first step, you have to change the whole attitude of the people that live here."

Orr agreed, saying, "We had a meeting recently where the general perception was, we don't want Dunes City to grow. It was designed to be rural and not embrace growth. We would need to find out if the citizens have a different perspective."

"It may be time to do that," Mills said.

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"We have two top priorities: one is to reach out to

the community, members, volunteers, fosterers and donors to reengage supporters with the shelter and the animals. And, two, is to work on improving the physical shelter ... upgrading some areas that have simply aged and creating an isolation/intake area so we can manage the flow of incoming animals," he said.

Curran is confident the staff members currently in place at the OCHS shelter are dedicated to the animals under their care and believes the rumors and controversies surrounding the organization's treatment of its animals are a thing of the

past.

"The staff here are all animal lovers that are doing the best they can, every day, to take the best care of the animals. This is a great team, that cares greatly about the animals here, and I am confident that the animals here are receiving the attention and care they need," he said.

Curran has started on the development of a plan to improve the living spaces for the animals at OCHS and to create a more inviting and useful intake area for lost or abandoned animals.

In addition, the need to isolate strays from the general shelter population is an

other priority. A renovation of the entrance area to the facility is also high on his list of things to do.

Over the years, there have been some negative ramifications created by the hostilities between previous OCHS boards and OCHS members, at times resulting in shouting and eventually culminating in police presence at the organization's board meetings.


Curran is determined those types of exchanges will not reoccur under his watch. He is also hopeful that disenchanted former OCHS members will attend next week's meeting to talk with

him and discuss any lingering concerns they may have.

"The key thing to get out is that we are working really hard to make the humane society the best it can be, and if anyone has any questions or concerns, they should contact me directly," he said. "OCHS is doing great work and I am excited to be joining the team to expand and amplify our services in our community. I'm committed to this role and am excited to roll up my sleeves and get started."

For more information about OCHS, visit www.oregoncoasthumane.org.

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