

Water franchise fee may drown budget deficit for City of Banks

Placing a franchise fee on water bills to reduce or eliminate the city's budget deficit was the subject of serious discussion by Banks City Councilors at their meeting this month. Mayor Bob Orlowski distributed an analysis based on actual bills showing the plan could generate as much as \$155,000 in a single year to eliminate the city's debt. Water customers will be asked to comment on the plan this month.

The price tag for relief in a single year is probably higher than either the councilors or the public would accept. The highest rate discussed was 30 cents for every 100 gallons of water used. Lower rates of 10 or 20 cents per 100 gallons would generate approximately \$50,000 and \$100,000 respectively. At the 20-cent level, these rates translate into an increase in homeowner's water bills of approximately \$9 to \$20 per month. Orlowski said that this middle course "would meet the city's needs better" than the highest rate.

Councilor Katie Murdoch opened discussion with a strong statement that the fee "was a tax without representation from the people." Orlowski said that it was an equitable way to distribute the cost and that "water is the only income-generating source in the city." Councilor Ryan Birr advocated creating a reserve fund to provide for future costs, such as those associated with seeking

an additional water source or making infrastructure improvements.

Costs to individual homeowners may be nominal with a franchise fee, but costs to large commercial users and the Banks School District could be substantial. However, contracts may be developed with Tualatin Valley Irrigation District to reduce some of the water costs for the school and Arbor Village Homeowners Association.

Water supply, 2001/02 budget dominate discussion at Banks council

Money and water issues were the primary focus of the Banks City Council at their April 10 meeting. (See related article on a potential water franchise fee.) Monetary issues included employee salaries and benefits and payroll procession. The planning commission report, audience comments and other reports rounded out the meeting.

Dale Merrell, the city's contract engineer, reported on two ways for the city to increase its water supply. It may be possible to meet short term needs with access to the Quail Valley Golf Course well. Merrell has begun negotiations that would allow the city access to Quail Valley's well in emergency situations.

A potential long-term solution may develop from a proposal by the Unified Sewerage Agency to be included as a stakeholder in the Water Supply Feasibility Report developed by Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM). The report will study the feasibility of securing additional water supplies for the Tualatin River watershed by raising the level of Hagg Lake. Council approved participation in such an agreement if it will secure access to this potential water source. However, Mayor Bob Orlowski and Merrell warned that the study project currently

Modeled after a similar fee increase in the city of Cornelius that will take effect in June, Orlowski used actual water bills to project income generated. By using the relatively wet, low use months of January and February projected income should not be affected by conservation efforts, increased use in the summer and mandatory curtailment efforts during a drought.

The cost of maintaining the

being considered would cost the city approximately \$2,250 in fiscal 2001.

Merrell also said that he had contacted state Rep. Bruce Starr about three transportation projects that would benefit the city of Banks - improved eastern access to Highway 6, resurfacing of Highway 47 in the city and improvements to the Banks Road/Highway 47 intersection. Merrell said Starr indicated he would attempt to obtain funding for a feasibility study for improved eastern access.

Council approved wage increases for city employees Karen Heesacker and Bob

Clifford said that this was a very difficult decision but that council must ensure that the city does not return to being without a local police force.

Murdoch, Birr and Branstitre will draft a questionnaire to be inserted in this month's water bills. Since the council must enact the fee within the next two months in order to include the income generated in next year's budget, there is limited time for public comment.

Highway 47 remains on schedule to begin operation in August. The planning commission also approved two variances to the fencing ordinance and has begun to review the fencing ordinance standards.

In other business, the council:

- Approved contracting for payroll services with Automated Data Processing;
- Will schedule a public hearing on "No Parking" signs in May;
- Received a copy of a 1912 map showing small land parcels platted for the town of Wilkesboro on land now occupied by Quail Valley Golf Course.

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Annual auction supports students, many projects

The 28th annual Banks Community Auction will be Saturday, April 28, at Banks High School.

Activities during the day-long event include a huge garage sale beginning at 9:00 a.m., a silent auction at 5:00 p.m. and an oral auction at 7:00 p.m. An All-You-Can-Eat Spaghetti Dinner will be served from 4:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Among the items included in the auction this year are a three day/two night trip to Las Vegas, Reno, Laughlin, Mesquite, Lake Tahoe or Mississippi, Nevada; a glider ride, a day spa visit and much more! For

more items, visit the web site www.Banks.K12.or.us/auction

The Banks Community Auction was first organized by parents in 1973 to raise funds for a student foreign exchange program. Since then, the auction has grown in both popularity and productivity and is now the biggest, most entertaining fundraiser in Banks. Parents, students and community members work together to coordinate this huge event.

The proceeds help out not only the school, but many community projects as well. The school uses proceeds for scholarships to graduating sen-

iors, to help fund high school sports programs and to aid other activities. All BHS sports are pay-to-play and, without the efforts of the community and the money raised through the auction, there would be no sports program in Banks schools. The public library, the park and the fire and rescue department, along with others, also benefit from the auction.

Grand Re-opening of Banks Scout Cabin

Dedication ceremonies for the Scout Cabin in Banks are scheduled for Wednesday, **Please see page 10**

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