

Banks School Board hears proposed technology requirements

Banks School District Board of Directors approved new members of the administrative team and discussed a new high school graduation requirement at their May 14 meeting. Board member Gene Kelly asked Superintendent Marilyn McGlasson to outline the process used to hire new members of the administrative team.

Since Elementary Principal Ester Lee has only been with the Banks district for one year, the retirement of junior high Principal Ted Faro and the resignation of high school Principal Jeff Smith could have left the district with novice principals at all three schools. In order to avoid this and insure continuity, Jim Foster, who has been with the district for many years was transferred to the High School Principal's job. Though often seen by the public as disciplinarian, Foster's previous role as High School Vice Principal was considerably broader in scope and both McGlasson and the board felt Foster was well qualified to move into the principal's job.

Candidates for junior high principal and high school vice-principal were screened and interviewed by two different groups composed of staff, administrators and the public. Martin Voge comes to Banks from Scappoose to become principal at the junior high. He was principal at Grant Watts Elementary for three years and has 16 years of teaching experience. The new high school vice-principal/athletic director will be Jim Smith. Smith is currently an administrative intern with the Hillsboro School District and head track coach at Glencoe High School. He has 14 years teaching experience.

High school principal Jeff Smith opened the discussion about making the new Technology Concepts a graduation requirement by clarifying when this would be put into effect. The course will be offered next year, for the first time, as an elective. It will be a recommended elective for all classes until the class of 2005, at which time it is proposed as a requirement for graduation. No change is proposed in the total number of credits required for graduation (24). Instead, the number of electives would be reduced from eight to seven in order to add the new requirement.

Board members expressed concern that students have an opportunity to take electives and were reassured by Smith that the total number of credits possible, varies from 28 to 32, depending on how many classes a student takes per term.

The requested change is part of an overall technology plan developed over the last four months by a group of teachers, administrators and community members. Scott Bradley, a committee member with 15 years of technology industry experience, told the board that there "isn't a career out there that does not involve

technology." Asked why the course should be required rather than just an elective, Smith said the committee decided that all students should have to learn essential technical skills. He compared this expectation to previous expectations that all students take typing classes to graduate at a time when typing was the current "technology".

Brad Henegar will be developing the course from materials presented in "Building a Foundation for Tomorrow," a curriculum developed in Bellevue, Wash., and in use in schools throughout Washington. The course is designed as a survey of technology applica-

tions with emphasis on career opportunities. Students will "work" for a fictitious company as Production Assistants in a full range of technical applications including hardware and software installation and configuration, graphics, database and spreadsheet design, word processing, research, e-mail and multimedia presentation.

Duane Lundstat, another community member of the committee, said that, by implementing this course, Banks has the "ability to put out students that are not just good, but great."

Superintendent McGlasson reminded the board that Banks High School is considered a

leader in developing new curriculum. Board member Willis Meeuwse expressed concern about installing a course as a requirement when it has not been "tested". He was however, along with other board members, generally in favor of offering the course as an elective. The board will continue this discussion and make a decision at next month's meeting.

The Banks chapter of Future Farmers of America (FFA) has received numerous awards at the district and state level according to Scott Jansen and Brad Evers. The chapter has been recognized for the last two years as the fastest growing chapter and now has 35 -

40 active members. Several members received proficiencies. The chapter has had several very successful fundraisers, including a recently concluded plant sale. The public is invited to the FFA Spring Banquet to be held May 23rd.

- In other business the board:
- Approved adoption of health textbooks;
 - Approved school fees for 2001-2002 including a new fee of \$10 for Photo/Journalism and an increase from \$5 to \$10 for Agricultural/Industrial Education;
 - Announced that the second annual Summer School will begin June 18th.

Water user fee may bail out drowning Banks budget

Banks City Council, at a special meeting on May 16, reached a consensus on how to institute user fees on city water to reduce the city's budget deficit and support the police department, but not whether to do so. Council has been considering the fee for two months and the budget approved by the budget committee includes revenue that would be generated by a fee of 10 cents for every thousand gallons of water used (.001).

Banks has modeled the proposed plan on the charges assessed by the city of Cornelius. The fees in Cornelius were originally franchise fees, assessed as a percentage of profits. As of May 1st, the fee was changed to a user fee, based on a percentage of use. Cornelius is using the funds provided by the fee to fund employee positions that would have had to be cut and is a permanent part of the budget. The fee being considered in Banks is proposed as a temporary measure, primarily to eliminate the city's debt and, secondarily, to provide additional funds for the police department. According to Orlowski the city "could exist on the (current) tax base, outside of the police department" if the debt were eliminated.

Lucas indicated that the city could charge users a fee. Oregon's voter-approved property tax limitation measures would not affect a user fee as long as the fee was not attached to assess property values in any way. In addition, any fee established would have to be "reasonable." A variety of methods can be used to determine if a proposed fee is reasonable including comparison with fees charged by other municipalities, fees charged to other utilities, and public comment.

Public comment was requested through questionnaires sent with the April bills to all 660 water users. By May 16, 141 responses - a remarkable 21.5 percent - had been received by the city. A response rate of 10-15 percent is considered normal for this type of survey.

Forty percent of those responding indicated that a fee of .001 would be acceptable. An

additional 14 percent indicated that a higher rate of .002 would be acceptable. Sixteen percent of the responses indicated preference for a property tax, however, Oregon law would make it difficult to raise the needed income through increased property taxes. Only seven percent of the respondents wrote "No" on their returned surveys and 20 percent of the surveys included unclassified, written responses.

Councilor Ryan Birr said he felt that the city had no choice but to enact some kind of fee in order to have the ability to reduce the city's budget deficit. Attempting to define the methods of establishing whether or not a fee is reasonable for council Lucas indicated that, in addition to public comment, the current water rate should be compared to water rates in other municipalities. Franchise fees assessed on other utilities within the city should also be compared. Lucas and city engineer Dale Merrill will prepare a report on city franchise fees and comparable cities water rates for the June council meeting.

Councilor Tim Hardie asked Lucas and Orlowski what the effects of continuing to operate with a deficit would be. One effect, according to Lucas, would be to decrease the city's ability to bond debt. Orlowski said that Oregon does have a balanced budget law that applies to all public bodies and that there is no allowance in the law to plan to overspend. The risk, according to Orlowski, is that individual councilors could be sued by individual taxpayers for approving a deficit budget.

"The real question is: 'Would the citizens rather have a council that passes a budget that

contains real numbers or, as happens in many small cities, a budget with questionable numbers just to meet budget law?'" Orlowski said. The budget proposed by Orlowski and approved by the budget committee reflects tight spending, continued efforts to economize and conservative revenue projections.

Council reached a consensus and requested that Mayor Orlowski have a resolution prepared for discussion at the June 12 meeting. The parameters discussed included enacting the fee by resolution with a "sunset" clause and establishing a defined amount of the revenue to be used for debt reduction. Orlowski urged the public to attend the next regular council meeting June 12th, where the resolution enacting a water user fee will be discussed and voted on.

Other business before the council concerned expenses in the police department. Chief Daryl Crandall said that he needs both new computers and new police cars as soon as possible. Council directed Crandall to use the \$2,500 remaining in the 2000-2001 budget to purchase computers. \$7,000 of the money trans-

ferred from the water department to cover remaining expenses in this fiscal year was approved for the purchase of a police vehicle from the Portland police department. This will result in an increase of the projected budget deficit for this fiscal year. However, according to Orlowski, it is still expected that the budget will end next fiscal year (2001-2002) without a deficit as projected.

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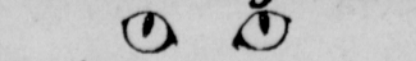
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