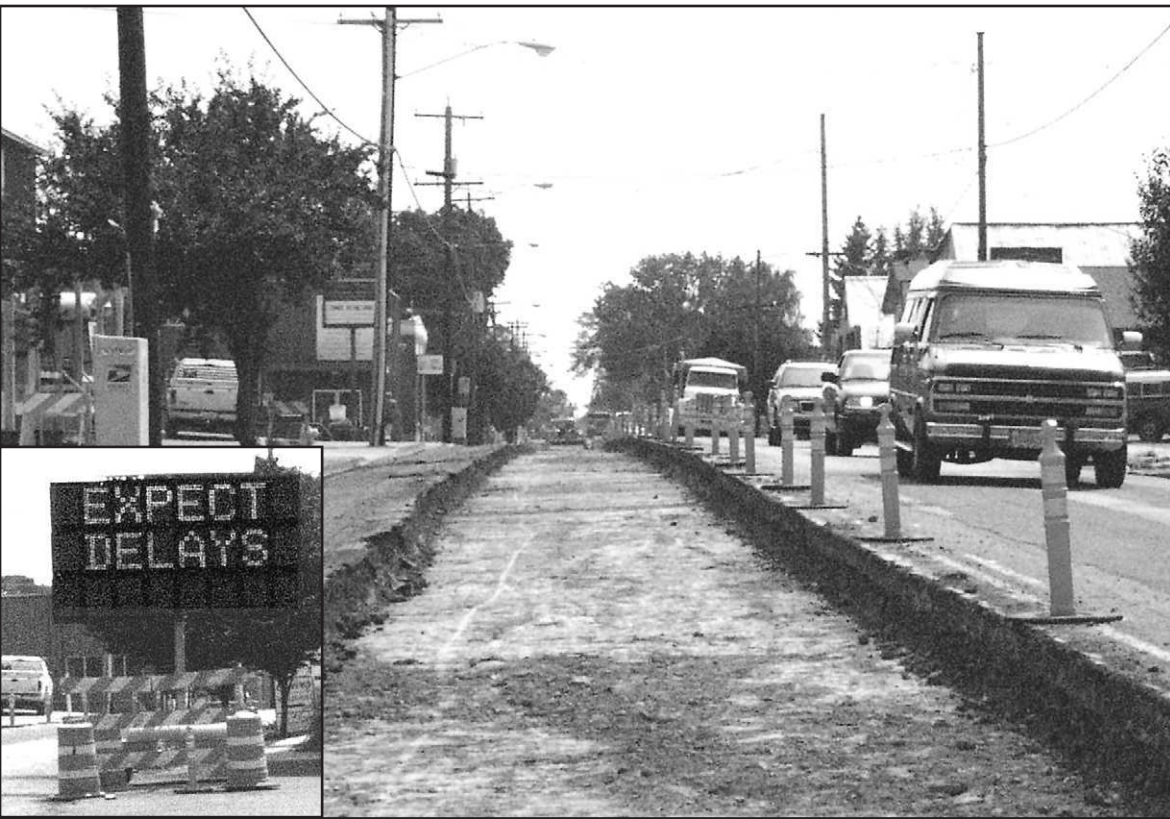


# Needed highway work causes delays



In order to complete resurfacing before the Banks Bar-B-Q, traffic will be limited to one lane with flaggers on duty 24 hours daily. The inset at bottom left tells it like it is!

Following a public informational meeting on July 22, contractor Eagle-Elsner began repaving Highway 47 on July 26. The contractor is "attacking the town from both ends" in order to complete the project before the Banks Bar-B-Q, August 21-22, according to Banks Public Works Superintendent Tim Grossnickle. The highway will be resurfaced from the Sellers

Road intersection on the north end of town, to Wilkesboro Road, south of Banks.

Because a lot of the existing road must be removed and there is no alternate route through town, one lane of the highway will be closed for the duration of the paving activity. Traffic will be flagged through the open lane, twenty-four hours a day, for as long as nec-

essary. Residential parking will be restricted but parking on both sides of Wilkes, Depot and Market will be allowed.

Grossnickle said that residents should be prepared for a wait of up to twenty minutes at either end of town, possibly waiting as long as forty minutes to get through the city. He also praised Banks Lumber Company, which has voluntarily restricted traffic.

Travelers may use a somewhat lengthy detour around the city, using Hwys. 26 and 6, to reach Hwy. 47 north or south.

# Banks will put police levy back on the ballot, start process to hire new chief

Funding and staffing a police department again dominated discussion at the July 13 meeting of the Banks City Council.

Noting that Banks currently has only one police officer, Mayor Bob Orłowski proposed putting a police services levy on the November ballot, at \$2.00 per thousand dollars of assessed value. The previous levy of \$1.80/thousand, which expired June 30, provided \$127,550 in fiscal year 2003-04 and was supplemented with \$59,300 from the general fund. There had been no increase in either the police levy, since voters approved it seven years ago, or the general tax levy during the last ten years. The proposal would require about \$80,000 per year from the general fund in order to provide adequate revenue for a three person department.

Orłowski also asked council to allow him to begin the hiring process for a new chief.

Councilor Katie Murdoch expressed hesitation to hire a chief when the city lacks structure and leadership, and is beginning the process of hiring a city manager. She said that council should engage in discussion about what is desired, and that too many officers have left the department.

Taking a different approach, Councilor Ryan Birr said that a new chief could be the catalyst needed to pass a levy, and Councilor Kirk Andrews considered hiring a chief as a way to

begin putting together a new team.

The group agreed with a suggestion by Councilor Teri Branstitre and approved the formation of a hiring committee. Murdoch will chair the committee, which will include council members and representatives from legal service, community, neighboring law enforcement, schools etc.

Returning to funding for law enforcement, Branstitre said that, the city "has paid officers embarrassingly low salaries" and wants an increase that would provide competitive salaries for the full four-year term of the levy.

Birr said that he thought the department should be funded through the general fund, which would require an increase in the general tax rate, a complicated process not considered by council at this meeting. He also made the motion to put a police levy on the November ballot at \$2.00/thousand saying, "there is no way to support the kind of police department wanted here (well equipped, well trained, etc.) at the current funding level."

Orłowski expressed concern about voter approval for an increased levy, when the general fund currently has a surplus. Property tax statements showing a reduced tax rate will go out just before the election.

Council unanimously agreed to seek approval for a police levy.

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