

Banks City Council holds hearings, appoints new commissioner

Banks city council met June 14 with the longest agenda in the last five years, including two public hearings, the first for a proposed plan amendment and the second on a violation of city code at the apartments located at Parmley and Wilkes.

Before the proposed plan amendment hearing, the council heard from David Helton, of EcoNorthwest a firm retained by city planner K.J. Won, completed a detailed analysis of economic opportunities and

presented the recommended strategy for the city. Most of the funding for the comprehensive plan review is provided by a series of technical assistance grants Won has obtained from the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development (LCD). This amendment is part of a two-year work program to update the entire comprehensive plan, developed in 1988, for the next 20 to 25 years. A previous amendment in 2004 set the population forecast at 3,739 in 2024.

The existing economic goal "to provide for the economic diversification and stability" of Banks with the objective of achieving a balance between commercial and industrial opportunities, sustainable growth and local employment opportunities remains in place. However, the previous inventory of industrial land overstated acreage and is further reduced by the presence of wetlands. The strategy identified in the recommendation is to increase the supply of buildable commercial and industrial land.

Helton told council that the adoption of a strategy is important because any action taken by council, such as changing zoning or amending the urban growth boundary (UGB), must be consistent with goals and

strategies identified in the comprehensive plan approved by LCD. Banks has a comparative advantage over other small towns in Oregon because it retains a small town atmosphere, is close to the metropolitan area but outside the metropolitan UGB.

In addition to determining the need for land, the analysis also attempts to predict the need for jobs. Though difficult to compare urban growth rates to rural areas, Helton told council that growth would be at a slower rate than in the surrounding metro area. Using a growth rate of 5 - 6 %, he predicted the need for 860 to 1170 jobs: 320-430 commercial, 320-430 industrial and 410-540 in community facilities (primarily education and government).

Helton told council that the city had a deficit of land that would allow for employment growth. Using standard formulas, he determined that the city would need to add approximately 100 acres of commercial/industrial land for future development, including about 15 acres for schools. After explaining various factors affecting economic growth, Helton told council government can influence growth by designating land for development, providing adequate infrastructure, and maintaining good quality of life.

In conclusion, Helton told council that the next steps are an analysis of housing needs and a study of potential sites for inclusion into the Banks UGB.

According to Helton's report, the primary financial incentive for business to locate in Banks should be available land, affordable public services, low permit and development fees and a simple development approval process.

During the public hearing following Helton's report, Franklin Smith accused council members of "trying to make [Banks] the rat race you moved away from". Mayor Mike Lyda said that the plan covers the next twenty years of development and pointed out that any land that the city includes inside the UGB is that much less land available for Washington County. He said the city would have "more control over our destiny than if we leave it alone."

The council then went into the violation of code at the apartments at Parmley and Wilkes. The city had not received a reply to a letter notifying the landowner about the hearing nor did the owner appear at the hearing. Marshal Decker, Washington County code enforcement officer, told council in April that the property was identified as an attractive nuisance due to an open unoccupied apartment and unsecured electrical wiring. Decker ordered that the uncovered wiring be disconnected and the building secured. The power was disconnected and the door secured briefly. However, the flimsy lock was quickly removed and the building is open again according to

Deputy Jim Berning.

The city has determined a nuisance at the apartments on at least three previous occasions. In the past, the property has been brought into compliance just before fines would be assessed. In March, property owners had not removed garbage and the city paid for the dumpster to be emptied. The city is pursuing a lien against the property to recover this expense.

During the hearing, the Independent asked why the city had not moved forward with ordinance amendments that would allow the city to declare the site a chronic nuisance, allowing the city to impose additional remedies. Mayor Lyda responded that the city had been evaluating many Washington county ordinances for adoption by the city. However, review of county ordinances has not been completed. Lyda said that the city did not want a blanket adoption of the Washington county code.

Council unanimously determined that a nuisance exists at the apartments located at 263 Wilkes and 265 Parmley and directed city attorney Jim Lucas to send the property owner a detailed letter of the required abatement. Branstitre said that she would have a chronic nuisance ordinance prepared for a first reading at the July council meeting.

Following the two hearing, council unanimously approved an intergovernmental agreement with Washington County to provide law enforcement services. Currently the county provided two deputies working in the city 25 hours per week at a cost of \$12,591 per month

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