

Tree Board plants one for Banks



Left to right; Mayor Teri Branstitre, Denise Holme, Levi Eckhardt, Tami Stewart, Jessica Steward, and Mitty Brady help plant a tree for the Banks Tree Board.

The City of Banks reinstated its Tree Board, this past September, after a few years without a board. Tree Board members are City Manager Jim Hough, Tami Stewart, Mitty Brady, and Dawn Soest.

The Banks Fire Department's new landscaping was chosen as the place for the first planting. The board worked with the fire department to choose a tree and the Acer Palmatum, or Japanese Maple, was chosen for its beautiful scarlet fall foliage.

The board then held its '1st Annual Fall Planting', November 10 at the Banks Fire Department to plant the chosen tree. Mayor Teri Branstitre was on hand to read a proclamation commending the Banks Tree Board for its superior service to the City and citizens of Banks.

Said City Manager Hough, "We encourage tree planting (by the Tree Board) on public property."

The Tree Board intends to work toward having Banks again designated as a Tree City, as they were in the past. After the newly planted tree was in the ground, and the proclamation read, those in attendance were invited to join the Tree Board in refreshments inside the fire department.

The next Tree Board meeting will be held Wednesday, December 5, at 7:00 p.m. in Banks City Hall. The public is welcome to attend.

Rate study reviewed by Banks council

Results of the water rate study were presented by Shaun Pigott at the Banks City Council work session on Tuesday, November 13. The study examined how Banks allocates costs since the last change, in 2002, and identified options for future changes. Currently, 48 percent of rates paid are from the base of \$16.65 per account, with 52 percent from volume charge. In September, Council requested a conclusion on rates considering the following factors: Rates should not reflect any subsidy from the general fund (currently the city includes subsidies in the general fund, an uncommon practice); a look at a targeted capital improvement program, leaving the water depreciation fund intact, and revision of ordinances to allow automatic annual rate adjustments that reflect cost escalation.

A 14 percent rate increase in 2002 was for a water rate budget of \$310,000; the water budget currently is approaching \$564,000. The city balanced revenues with expenditures in 2002 by using \$150,000 from the water depreciation fund, \$241,930 in 2006 from timber sales, and \$35,000 from the city's general fund, plus a draw-down of beginning fund balances and transfers of SDC

funds of \$67,500 in 2004. "There is no growth to support [using] SDC" funds, Pigott noted.

Pigott presented six rate options to consider for meeting the 2008 revenue requirements: 1. Continuing the general fund subsidy with a base rate of \$22.46 plus \$2.75 per ccf creates an average billing of \$30.71, a 32 percent increase over the current rate. 2. Eliminate a \$35,000 general fund subsidy, change the base rate to \$26.50 plus \$2.75 per ccf, for an average billing of \$34.75, a 49% increase. 3. Adding increased personnel costs of \$52,000, a base rate of 30.75 and use of \$2.96 per ccf, a 70 percent increase. 4. Debt finance the two capital improvement projects (master plan and interconnecting well), with no increase in personnel costs, a rate base of \$26.50 and \$3.11

per ccf for an average bill of \$35.83, a 54 percent increase. 5. Fund depreciation at \$25,000 (currently \$50,000), debt finance the two projects with no increased personnel costs, a base rate of \$23.62, and of \$3.11 per ccf for an average bill of \$32.95, a 42 percent increase. 6. No funding of depreciation, debt financing the two projects, not including increased personnel costs with a base rate of \$20.73, and \$3.11 per ccf, for an average bill of \$30.06, a 29 percent increase to rate payers.

The study showed that the city's water rates are considerably lower than comparable rural city rates for a single-family residence. Mayor Branstitre questioned Pigott and council, "where are we at now?" Pigott responded that it is "...how far council is willing to ramp rates up."

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