



The Friday Update

Bringing you a summary of weekly news from City Hall

December 21, 2001

CITY OF COOS BAY

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HAPPY HOLIDAYS - The City Council and Staff wish everyone a happy holiday season and a bright new year! The public library and city hall administrative offices will be closed December 24th and 25th.

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS CONTEMPLATE COUNTYWIDE ROOM TAX -- Yesterday afternoon the three Coos County Commissioners met with the Coos Bay – North Bend Tourism and Promotions Committee to discuss the benefits of imposing a new hotel-motel occupancy tax (aka, “room tax”) on those using motels and campgrounds located outside city limits. At present, there is no such tax and the result is two-fold. For one, Coos Bay and North Bend revenues are promoting the entire area without the help and benefit of those motels and campgrounds in unincorporated areas. For another, thousands of dollars are being “left on the table” ... so to speak ... as travelers and campers staying outside the cities are not paying the tax that would be required of them were they to have stayed inside town. This creates a situation that is obviously unfair.

Mayor Joe Benetti, a member of the Committee, led the charge in arguing in favor of the new tax for unincorporated areas. Coos Bay city councilor Don Spangler was on hand to lend support as owner of a local “bed & breakfast” establishment located in Coos Bay. When county commissioner Nikki Whitty asked what the room tax revenues are used for, Committee staffer Beve Saukko responded with a long list of beneficial activities ... all related to the promotion of the area as a tourism destination. Traditionally, county commissioners have balked at imposing the tax on unincorporated motels and campgrounds, including those owned by the county itself. This attitude may be softening as the commissioners are giving the idea a new look. Kudos to them for this!

To put the issue in perspective, in recent years the Tourism-Promotions Committee has promoted the area on a budget that is less than \$150,000 a year. Mayor Benetti and city manager Bill Grile quantified the potential new revenue that could be generated by “leveling the playing field” with a countywide room tax, citing figures generated by a Bandon Dunes Golf Resort consultant showing that as much as \$670,000 a year could flow from the resort itself in the future if its wealthy visitors were required to pay a room tax.

The commissioners are expected to make a decision on the question sometime after the first of the year. If they don't, the possibility of an initiative petition to create the new tax remains a possibility and has been quietly considered by some in the Bay Area. North Bend mayor John Briggs, also on hand at the meeting, asked Commissioner Whitty if bringing forward a citizen initiative would make the situation “more politically convenient” for the commissioners. “Why would we need to?” she responded, suggesting that the commissioners just need a little time to think more about the proposal. Stay tuned. *“We'll leave the light on.”*

ALISHANEE FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT CENTER SPARKS SHARP DEBATE – The Confederated Tribes' proposal to site a bowling alley and "family entertainment center" at a site behind the Bayshore Motel off of U.S. Highway 101 drew sharp opinions from some in the Council Chambers this week when the project came before the City Council in the form of a street vacation request needed to advance the development. Opposed to the development for various reasons, some contend the right-of-ways are needed for future growth in the area. Others argued the development should be opposed because they fear gambling at the site. Still others complained that the Tribes would not pay their fair share for public services since Indian lands aren't required to pay property taxes like other developments. Others objected because they reason that the development would compete unfairly with existing business in the Bay Area. For their part, the Tribes countered each of these objections with rationale producing an opposite conclusion. The City Council will take up the issue again on January 2nd at which time a decision is expected. The Tribes, eager to move forward with this project and an announced casino in Florence, stressed that Alishanee "will go north" (implying, "outside of Coos County") if a decision on the street vacations is delayed again. One view is that Alishanee is a major development that would have significant economic benefits to Coos Bay if troubling questions can be resolved. Yesterday the Tribal Council faxed to City Hall a formal resolution proclaiming and confirming its public stated intention to not place Class III gaming (ie. , casino-type) at the Coos Bay Alishanee type. This fulfills a request of them and should eliminate some of the objections to the project, or so it would seem.

COOS COUNTY SOLID WASTE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MOVES CLOSER TO RECOMMENDATIONS ON BEAVER HILL -- Meeting for the second time this month, Wednesday night the Committee came just short of releasing a draft report with conclusions and recommendations about how it feels the County should proceed with challenges facing the Beaver Hill Solid Waste Facility. A final revised draft presenting committee findings and recommendations are being circulated to committee members, including Coos Bay city councilor Kevin Stufflebean, with the expectation that revisions will be considered at another meeting on January 16th and a decision made at that time to release the proposed document. The press has not been covering the committee's meetings.

BROAD-BAND CONNECTIVITY IN THE BAY AREA -- At the risk of sounding like a commercial for one of the local telecom service providers ... and this is NOT our intent! ... it's worth mentioning that cable modem and high-speed Internet connectivity is now present and moving forward here in the Bay Area. Charter Communications is gradually bringing its high-speed cable-based Internet service to neighborhood after neighborhood. This week city manager Bill Grile had an opportunity to see the new capability demonstrated first-hand and was very impressed. "Cable modems won't necessarily be the best option for everyone in the Bay Area for a number of technical reasons, but for many the advantages will be overwhelming when compared to other connection alternatives," he said. Charter Communications is investing millions of dollars here in the Bay Area and needs to be commended for the confidence it is showing in the future of our area. We'll proclaim the investments that hopefully will be made by Charter's competitors if and when these occur. Competition is healthy!!

CHAMBER GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE REFOCUSES -- Committee chair Rick Howell, Chamber Incoming President Timm Slater, Chamber executive director Shirley Liberante and others met this week to reorganize the Government Affairs Committee to help make it more effective and useful to local businesses. A number of innovative ideas came forward from the brainstorming session, including one that would have the committee undertake a "Quality Service Initiative" targeted to local and state government service delivery to make sure that our local government services are as customer and business-friendly as they can be. "I really like the idea," said city manager Bill Grile, who attended the meeting. "This could prove to be a great way to make sure that we're fulfilling our service delivery obligations in the manner that they

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are intended to be delivered,” he added. Additional dialogue on this and other ideas under consideration will be forthcoming.

GARY YOUNG IS BEING PROMOTED -- While the timing remains a bit uncertain at present, OMI’s Coos Bay project manager, Gary Young, is being promoted. Gary will be traveling and remaining in the Bay Area, working out of his home and suitcase, so to speak. The good news is that he will be around and available to help the new OMI manager’s transition and with special challenges as these arrive from time to time. Last week community services director Shanda Shribbs and city manager Bill Grile interviewed two finalists that are under consideration for the position. OMI regional manager Thom Day has indicated he will take the City’s thoughts into consideration before naming Gary’s replacement. As with everything else OMI does for the Coos Bay, their cooperation and sensitivity to the City’s concerns has been excellent.

REORGANIZATION PLANNED FOR THE ROSEBURG FIRE DEPT -- It appears that the Roseburg Fire Department is eliminating its bargaining unit *Captain* positions and creating new management positions called *Battalion Chiefs*. According to Coos Bay Fire Chief Stan Gibson, Roseburg feels a great need to have true supervisors on each shift when the chief and assistant Chiefs are not present. The Roseburg firefighters bargaining unit is very opposed to this and plans to fight the change. The Roseburg chief’s rationale supporting the change is, however, identical to that here in Coos Bay.

WATER BOARD TO UNDERTAKE A RATES AND CHARGES STUDY -- The Water Board plans to seek proposals for a consultant to review its rates and charges. Kudos to the Board and to general manager Rob Schab for inviting representatives from the Cities of Coos Bay and North Bend to help select the consultant and to participate in the review process once it gets underway. Coos Bay finance director Janell Howard will be accepting this special, short-term assignment for the City.

CORPS OF ENGINEERS TO OFFER OPINIONS ABOUT THE LIBBY DIKE -- Monday afternoon community services director Shanda Shribbs and the city manager attended a meeting at the Library at which all three of the County Commissioners, Sheriff Andy Jackson, and a host of others were present to discuss ongoing concerns about the Libby Dike. The group included about a dozen landowners ... all as concerned as the rest of us that the dike will breach and fail this winter. Without going into elaborate details, local Corps manager John Craig promised fast action by his agency to produce recommendations for a short-term solution (IF one exists) to address the dike’s condition, along with a proposed emergency action plan that can be implemented to failure happen before repairs can be completed. The City’s concern relates principally to the integrity of Southwest Boulevard and to the sewer and water infrastructure in the area that would be affected by a catastrophic dike failure, but we’re also concerned about protecting private property in the area as well. This is a potentially serious problem that city staff have been monitoring.

CITY AND SCHOOL DISTRICT PROGRESS WITH TECHNOLOGY PLANNING -- About three weeks ago department heads and the city manager met with Tim Enright, technology manager for CB Public Schools, to review his preliminary recommendations concerning the technology planning underway for the City as part of our partnership with the School District. This effort evolved from the discussions with Coos Bay’s Budget Committee last spring. To brief the Council about Tim’s findings and recommendations, a Council Work Session is planned for middle to late January. The date has not yet been set.

PUBLIC TV UPDATE -- Tuesday night city manager Bill Grile briefed the City Council about his plans to bring the Council a proposal to restructure the financial support for Government Channel 14 while creating an opportunity to restore the “public/community” access channel by having a non-profit corporation run both. This will require circulating a request for proposals, if the idea is approved by the Council. The question will come to the Council some time after the first of the year.

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WELCOME ABOARD JAMIE LAMBERT -- City Hall welcomes Jamie Lambert as the new staffer providing support and assistance in the city manager's office. Ms. Lambert follows Stacey Babb, who left recently for another position with a local insurance company. Welcome aboard Jamie!

HIRING PROCESS - The Fire Department has completed the written exam, physical agility and interview phases of the hiring process for the position of Firefighter./Engineer. Background checks are currently being conducted by the Police Department. At the conclusion of the background investigations offers of employment will be made to the successful candidates, with a tentative start date of February 1, 2002.

ROPE RESCUE CLASSES HELD - Members of the Coos Bay and North Bend Fire Departments recently completed a 24-hour refresher class in rope rescue techniques. The class was conducted by SMA, Inc. based out of Massachusetts and was provided at no cost to the departments by the New Carissa insurance carrier. The techniques that were learned may be utilized in other responses throughout the area both departments.

COOS BAY CITY HALL AND LIBRARY EVACUATED - Thursday afternoon at 2:33 p.m., Coos Bay City Hall and the Coos Bay Public Library were evacuated in a test of the City's Emergency Plan. A test of the Emergency Plan is conducted each year to assess the readiness of emergency responders and to allow city staff to become familiar with evacuation procedures in the event of an actual emergency. The Emergency Plan outlines protocols for natural disasters, tsunami alerts, bomb threats, acts of violence, and other emergencies. Employees from the City Hall and employees and patrons at the Library were directed out of their respective buildings to pre-designated staging areas.

POLICE DEPARTMENT RECRUITMENT UPDATE - The police department will have three new police officers on staff in early January 2002. The names of the officers will be released upon their successful completion of medical examinations. The three new officers include one certified officer returning Coos Bay from another police agency, and two new officers from other regions within Oregon. The two new officers will begin police academy training on January 14, 2002. Upon completion of academy training they will undergo an extensive field training program at Coos Bay.

TASK FORCE ON TERRORISM – The Federal Bureau of Investigation has established task forces in each county to work as liaison with the F.B.I. and local law enforcement. Detective Sergeant Dave Main has been appointed to the task force to represent Coos Bay. The task force will be the first investigators to respond to information from the F.B.I. or other sources as it relates to possible terrorist events on the South Coast. Coos Bay Police Department remains ready to respond to requests from the F.B.I. or U.S. Attorney's Office in keeping our community a safe place to live.

COMMUNITY ANTI-DRUG COALITION OF AMERICA – Coos Bay Police Officer Rodger Craddock recently attended the Community Anti-drug Coalition of America in Washington, D.C. Funding for the annual meeting was provided through a grant to the Commission on Children and Families. Local Commission members, elected officials, and community professionals were educated on various aspects of anti-drug activities and strategies. A highlight of the trip was a dinner meeting attended by President George W. Bush in which he signed legislation increasing funding for anti-drug programs. The Coos Bay Police Department appreciates the Commission on Children and Families' invitation to take part in such a worthwhile training opportunity.

MARSHFIELD HIGH SCHOOL OVERLAY PROJECT - After the first of the year City staff will begin preparing contract documents for the Marshfield High School Overlay Project. The project entails overlaying the following streets: South 10th Street from Ingersoll to Lockhart, Johnson Avenue from 7th to 10th and South 11th Street from Ingersoll to Golden. South 10th Street also will be slightly widened from Ingersoll to Johnson for safety. The City will have several alternates in the bid documents to allow the City to overlay other streets if the bid prices come in low enough. Other streets considered are Ingersoll

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from 4th to 7th, South 7th from Kruse to Lockhart and Kruse from 5th to 7th. The project will start after school is out in mid-June to eliminate any congestion around the school. The anticipated work will take approximately two weeks.

ANDERSON ALTERNATIVE NEARS COMPLETION - In the next two weeks the final pieces will be put in place for the final stage of the Anderson Alternative. Two-way traffic will be allowed on Anderson from South Bayshore to South 2nd St. Traffic heading west on Anderson and traffic heading east on Anderson in the north lane will be directed to turn onto South 2nd St. heading north. This work is a part of the traffic pattern changes recommended by the “Kittelson Report” in September 1997, and works with the traffic flow changes that formed a right turn only lane off of Anderson onto South 4th Street. These final changes were approved by the Coos Bay City Council in June, 2001.

The anticipated schedule (barring adverse weather conditions) is:

December 26 or 27, 2001:

- Re-stripe Anderson from South Bayshore to South 2nd Street with a yellow line down the middle - lay corrected street legends directing traffic.
- Cover the signal at South 2nd Street and Anderson (at the previous JC Penney building) and put a stop sign in and highlight the crossing at that location.
- Using pylons and other barriers, block the north lane of Anderson from South Bayshore to South 2nd Street.
- Put in place candle pylons at South 2nd Street on Anderson to direct vehicles heading east and west to turn north.
- Pass out handbills in downtown Coos Bay informing drivers of the changes.

January 2, 2002:

- “Light” the signal at South Bayshore to allow a left turn onto Anderson.
- Remove the barriers limiting traffic on the north lane on Anderson and allow westbound traffic.
- Leave in place candle pylons between the two-way traffic lanes to help folks remember it is two-way traffic for 1-2 additional weeks.

Spring/Summer:

- Complete permanent improvements at the corner of South 2nd Street and Anderson to direct traffic to turn onto South 2nd Street, but allow for removal of improvements for parade traffic.

Work is weather-related as a break in the weather is necessary to stripe the street and lay down the street legends. If the weather does not allow us to paint on this schedule, things will be pushed forward. Watch The World newspaper for the final changeover schedule. If you have questions, please contact the Community Services Department at (541) 269-8918.

HAVE YOU WONDERED? CENTRAL AVENUE OIL STILL UNDER CONTROL - At this time last year, we were considering how to work with the oil that was seeping through the City’s stormwater

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system into Coos Bay. In late spring, the City negotiated a “maintenance” system for the oil so that we could stop any oil from migrating through the system. Since that time, OMI, Inc., the City’s wastewater contractor, has been maintaining absorbent doughnuts in the stormwater manholes on the line through which the oil moved. OMI checks the pads weekly, and after any rain event of more than ½-inch per day. So far we haven’t seen any accumulation of oil, but we’ll keep up the program to insure no future oil enters the bay from this unidentified source. Community Services staff is pleased that this low-cost, environmentally sensitive response has worked AND that the oil has not reappeared!

HISTORIC DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE - The Committee will hold its very first meeting on January 2, 2002 at 6:00 p.m. in the Manager’s Conference Room at City Hall to elect a chairperson and vice-chairperson and review the proposed welcome sign for the entrance to the Empire area. Their mission is to determine whether or not the sign complies with the design review standards recently adopted for structures, including signs, along Newmark Avenue west of Ocean Boulevard. The public is welcome to attend.

EMPIRE SAFETY - In response to several pedestrian related accidents, City staff is looking into new ways to improve safety to pedestrians crossing Newmark Avenue at Schoneman Street in the Empire District of Coos Bay. Traffic counts during peak usage hours, methods used by other cities, and information available on the Internet are all being considered to better evaluate the problem. The City Council will make a decision when more information is available.