

Second Quarter 2005

From Bill Curtis

**Jim Polk**, city recorder in **Cave Junction**, talked over breakfast about a number of things going on in his city. With a current population of 1,440, he said he expected to see the next population from Portland State University to be sitting right near 1,600. "The growth in this city has been extraordinary," Jim said. He slid a piece of paper over my coffee cup that indicated that there are currently, with dates from July 1, 2003 through January 27, 2005, 382 residential parcels in the planning stages – either applications submitted or subdivisions and land partitions approved – and that's just inside the city limits. He compares those numbers with the period July 1, 2001 through July 1, 2003, when 15 (yes 15) lots were created and improved. And if the city were successful in expanding the Urban Growth Boundary and/or annexing some areas, that residential number would increase by an additional 342 residential lots with a destination resort hotel and with an expansion of the Illinois Valley Golf Club to 18 holes. Also in the planning stages but not submitted for approval are a 40 duplex unit (80 dwellings) for senior assisted care residences and the construction of a home improvement/building supply center. The application for a zoning adjustment for a 300,000 square foot commercial development and development of 86 residential lots was received and is scheduled for hearings later in May. The commercial district is in the planning stages and has been submitted to DLCD for approval of a change in their comprehensive plan. I had to admit to Jim, as we approached his truck for a tour of town, that I had never been off the highway through town, except to find City Hall. And as we drove around, I was astonished to see the availability of flat land for all these developments. And there were a number of properties that were in various stages of construction. Jim said, "Two years ago a residential lot might go for \$25,000. Today that lot would go for at least \$50,000."

The recent Downtown Revitalization Project has been completed and grant monies have been received, with the program ready to close out. Jim said all the work done in this project looks beautiful. The city recently agreed to provide water service to the Kerby Water District, a few miles to the north, consisting of about 75 residential customers. The District will be the main customer, purchasing the water through the main system meter. The City will provide operations and maintenance of the system, along with the meter reading and billing service for the Kerby water users. Jim is proud of Cave Junction and would love to show visiting managers around the area – give him a call or stop by City Hall.

**Sue Slack**, county administrator of **Jackson County**, said "The Budget Committee work has been completed" after which there followed a sigh of relief. The county will, in the next fiscal year, have essentially completed all the library projects with the recent countywide library levy, which provided the citizens with 15 new libraries in the county. Last year marked the completion of the new juvenile facility, which was completed last spring and which doubled the number of beds for juvenile offenders. In addition, they will begin the replacement of the airport terminal, a 4-5 year project budgeted at about 35 million. That project will see the doubling of the size of the airport parking lot, while the size of the terminal will be tripled. The new Community Justice Center, which incorporates all juvenile detention programs and all adult correction programs excluding jail, has a new director, Danny Jordan, who came from Clatsop County last summer. Sue spoke about installing a new computer system for the entire county, which will eventually handle general ledger, payroll, cash receipts, human resources, budget and labor forecast. It's a real-time system and, Sue says, "The learning curve is steep." Some of the modules have been installed to date, and others will come in the near future.

In the economic development area, Sue told me that Amy's Kitchen is moving from the San Francisco bay area to White City (an unincorporated area of Jackson County). A producer of food items bearing the name Amy's, the company intends to employ approximately 200 at family wage jobs. Over at the Jackson County Fairgrounds, construction of the new Lithia Motors Amphitheater is nearing completion, just in time for the County Fair – "Celebrate the Sounds of Summer" – July 19 thru 24 in Central Point. The amphitheater is a state-of-the-art facility for concerts, theater and other entertainment. Some of the headliners using the amphitheater for the first time will be Tracy Lawrence on the 20th and Clay Walker on the 22nd. Finally, a large project in the offing will consist of replacing 16 bridges in the county that are showing cracked girders. The generous one hundred percent funding will be provided by OTIA, and the contracts for repair will be let in groups of two or three at a time. Sue concluded our interview by saying, "we're busy down here in Jackson County and loving it."

**Betty Smith**, city recorder/treasurer in **Phoenix**, (population 4,570) has been on the job there for ten years and says she is still enjoying the job. Even though the part-time city administrator left over a year ago (August, 2003), the city fathers have not seen fit to change the charter to have the position elevated to that of city administrator or city manager. We talked about a problem she had been having with the U.S.P.S. not wanting to change some areas in the city that were using Medford addresses, which was causing delays in deliveries to some postal customers. When I asked her how that situation worked out, she replied, "Wonderfully!" She told me that the new stop lights placed at the end of the ramps on the west side of the Interstate have created both good and bad results. The good news is that the back-up on the off ramp has improved greatly, but a new problem backing up traffic from the city center onto the interstate has been created. She told me that city hall has been sold and staff has to be out to temporary quarters by the end of 2005. The city has purchased property in the center of town and with proper planning, in 4 to 5 years, the new city hall will be right in the center of the new "City Center." It will be approximately 10,000 square feet ("give or take 2,000 square feet") and will be on Main Street. She said, "The current city hall will be demolished by the end of the year to make room for the new library, which is part of the Jackson County county-wide levy. The old/current library building will probably become the new police station. She is hoping that part of the funding for the new city hall will come from a new Urban Renewal District.

Betty is excited that Home Depot has shown all indications that it will soon locate on the east side of I-5 inside the city limits. There is no Home Depot in the Rogue Valley at this time. She said the store will be an estimated \$12 million project, and may entail a new interchange on I-5. In addition, Blue Heron Park, located about ¼ mile south of the I-5 intersection with Fern Valley Road, will be witnessing the construction of new restrooms ("as we speak," she added) and new playground equipment will be added soon. She concluded our visit by saying that "Phoenix is a close-knit community and the citizens are friendly and interested in what's going on here. Fortunately, there are no cliques or negative groups here. I plan to retire in the Rogue Valley."

**Elise Smurzynski**, city administrator of **Shady Cove**, recounted to me that Shady Cove, like most Oregon cities, had just completed the Budget Committee meeting, approving a \$4.1 million dollar budget in just over 3 hours. She explained that the lion's share of the budget was accounted for in wastewater treatment plant upgrade construction costs. The good news is that the treatment plant should be completed this fall. Like some other small cities, GASB 34 compliance almost doubled the cost of their audit – quite a shock for a City with only 54.7 cents/\$1,000 AV (\$85,000) for the \$649,900 general fund. Shady Cove continues to provide the

best police and public safety services possible on \$240,000 a year with two officers and a part-time chief, but it is a heck of a struggle. Elise is grateful for the volunteer reserves, volunteers in the office, and mutual aid. With the voters of Shady Cove, like the voters throughout Oregon, reluctant to vote for a tax levy or a fee to help offset costs of operating a PD, volunteers and mutual aid are a godsend.

Shady Cove is working with DLCD on a 100-acre expansion that, they believe, will provide the key to unlock a golden future for Shady Cove. The expansion will be the catalyst for the development of a privately owned water system. It can serve as a backbone for a future municipal water system (which the city does not have), a transportation system that works, and relief for Shady Cove, which has suffered from limited and unpredictable ground water for decades. Shady Cove is seeing the impact of growth pressure on surrounding communities manifested in more development applications. It appears the secret of Shady Cove is out and folks just love relocating to this wonderful small community on the banks of the Rogue River, where they are close enough to visit the “big city” of Medford, but far enough away to enjoy the flora and fauna, fishing, photography, exploring and just plain fun. Elise dreams of SDCs for public buildings (city halls, fire depts., libraries). Like others, she prays for a generous electorate who will see the value in supporting services like police and public safety, or paving gravel roads. After 4-1/2 years as Shady Cove’s administrator, she is still grateful to work in such a beautiful community. She dreams of opportunities for more home rule to set local taxes and fees to meet state goals and ensure Shady Cove survives, thrives, and prospers. If you haven't been to Shady Cove, check it out on the web ([www.shadycove.net](http://www.shadycove.net)) and plan to spend the day.

**Betty Wheeler**, city manager in **Talent** (pop. 5,890) is pleased with all the new development in her city. She talked about a Workforce Housing Summit for Jackson, Josephine and Curry Counties in the planning stages for this fall, to develop a clearer understanding of the housing problem in the Rogue Valley and find some regional solutions. The increases in the housing markets are driving the working class out of the area. New and prospective businesses are concerned about relocating to the area because of the potential of an insufficient work force. There are currently 349 residential units in various stages of planning or construction in Talent. That’s a six percent increase during that period since 2002. When we last talked, she told me about the replicated Talent train station which was to be a park and ride facility for folks who wanted to ride the bus from the Talent area into the Medford. This hasn’t worked out as planned since the bus service is running on a tight budget and a tight timetable and is having problems in changing the route to accommodate the Talent bus riders. Betty also told me that she recently hired a finance director, who is getting his feet wet and she thinks he will work out great!

Betty mentioned a couple of projects going on: 1) Highway 99 through town is scheduled for reconstruction in August of this year; and 2) there will be a new bridge over Bear Creek at I-5 exit 21. The City has received two ODOT grants this year that will greatly improve two major city streets. 1) an enhancement grant for \$600,000 to extend bike lanes, sidewalks, and stormwater facilities; and 2) another grant for \$229,000 for sidewalks and bike lanes from downtown to the elementary school. She was disappointed that the Civic Center Project failed at the polls in November, since it would have provided a new city hall for Talent. Her fall-back position is to use urban renewal funds to build that new and sorely needed city hall. The new Talent library – part of the county library levy – will be built in 2006, and it will triple the size of the current facility. The new library is being built on leased city land. She was happy to report that volunteerism is increasing for city committees. Betty summed it up by concluding,

“In spite of dealing with a number of complex personnel issues, we’re still able to proceed with building permits, budget and day to day items, and a lot of good things are happening for Talent.”

Around the area: **Eric Swanson** began his new job as city manager in **Roseburg** on March 28. He comes to Oregon from Yankton, South Dakota. Please welcome Eric to our great state. What is hopefully the final search for a city manager in Reedsport is underway and being conducted by the League of Oregon Cities. The League is also conducting the search for a new manager in **Grants Pass**, to find a replacement for **Bill Peterson**, whose contract expires at the end of June. Don’t forget to set aside some time to attend the OCCMA Summer Conference in July!