

# City budget panel seeks boost in gas tax

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*Headlight-Herald Staff*

TILLAMOOK — The Budget Committee voted Monday night to recommend a 1.5-cent increase in the local gas tax, which would raise approximately \$135,000 for street repair.

"We desperately need to do something to move it (the amount in the fund) up," said Jon Williams, field supervisor for the Street Department.

City Manager Mark Gervasi warned that two years ago when the council tried to pass a similar tax, a group of citizens and gas dealers opposed it and brought a city-wide vote to the people, who didn't pass it.

Mayor Bob McPheeters said the reason for the tax, which would bring the total local tax to 3 cents per gallon, was to share the responsibility of road repair with nonresidents, who also use the roads.

Representatives from the Tillamook Bay Habitat & Estu-

ary Improvement District (TBHEID) asked the Budget Committee to consider giving the group \$25,000.

TBHEID's Tilda Jones presented a budget with five projects in the Tillamook watershed totaling an estimated \$1.7 million. The district's goal of protecting businesses on North U.S. 101, would be made easier by an infusion of cash from the city.

"We are the only (such) group in the area and we would like your partnership," Jones said.

But Gervasi argued that the City Council had recently given the group \$25,000.

"I just don't know where you're going to find \$25,000," he told the committee, explaining that the previous \$25,000 had been taken out of money left over in the 2006-07 budget.

Gervasi also questioned the group's accountability and the viability of the projects it proposed.

"You're asking this committee

and this council to do things on property we don't even own," he said.

McPheeters said the group should seek partnerships with entities such as the Port of Tillamook, but agreed with Gervasi that giving the grant at this time would be premature.

"I think there's a lot of imagination in some of this, but I think you need to look before you jump," he said.

Councilor Carolyn Decker supported the group.

"I realize money is tight but these guys are doing something for the city," she said. "If there is some extra money, we should give it to them."

The committee voted to have the council decide whether or not to give the money to the district.

Public Works Director Arley Sullivan told the Budget Committee that the city shop at Burch and Second streets is dangerously unstable and would likely crumble in an earthquake or heavy

windstorm. During soil testing, the department discovered the shop had been built on what used to be a city dump, with things such as Model T parts 15 feet underground. In order to stabilize the entire building, the ground would have to be excavated and replaced to provide a stable foundation for a new building.

Sullivan said the cost of doing so would be prohibitive and instead asked for a fund of \$440,000 to reinforce the building, adding perhaps 20 or 30 years to its lifespan.

"We're doing everything we can to save the whole building ... but we're not going to be able to do all the things we hoped to do," Sullivan said.

The next budget meeting will be May 14, 6 p.m., at City Hall.

