

To the editor

MONEY WOES

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In the 1970's, the City was beset by numerous complaints from the business community. Those complaints were for the most part due to a lack of parking space for employees and customers. This resulted in more tickets for those and other parking violations. Added to these complaints was the escalating deterioration of the down town core area. The latter being aggravated by a high percentage of absentee ownership. As councilman representing ward 2, I attended the League of Oregon Cities convention and brought back a proposal for a Transient Room Tax which the council approved and Mayor Walter Ackley signed into law the 2nd of August 1977. This was to serve as an ongoing funding source to fund needed improvements to the prime downtown commercial area.

However we had at least two very intense public meetings with the hotel / motel owners before they agreed to what was, and is, a very selective tax administered by only a few businesses. The council gained their support with an agreement that only 50 % of the then 6 % tax revenues would go to the General Fund while the balance would be used for, **“operation / maintence of public parking, parking lot purchase / construction, and advertising to promote tourism and economic development within Tillamook City.”**

Then, over time, numerous other uses were added to the allowable expenditures, “public police protection” even though that is already a General fund expenditure, but we can't quibble over “semantics” can we? Now the money is routinely transferred into any, and it seems all, other funds and if that is not enough they have added wording that will even allow all of the TRT monies to be transferred into the General Fund ,[except the 70 % of the latest 2 % increase] if the council perceives that the economic times are depressed to such a degree that it is necessary to do so. It is obvious that the 70% mentioned above would suffer a similar fate if it was not for state law.

The General Fund has become the black hole of Tillamook City and the Transit Room Tax is now the City's golden goose and any criticism of either is received with a bored look and silence. When the City is asked to act to solve a problem before it happens rather, than react once the damage is done, we are informed that “we do not have any money!” If the taxpayer has kept track, the Council has recently increased all of the franchise fees, even adding a franchise fee on the water and sewer charges which the City owns and operates.[which is just a clever way to get more money from everyone.] Doubled and tripled the planning fees, passed into law a doubling of the gas tax, after the voters had turned it down, and passed an ordinance to pay themselves \$50 dollars a month for attending meetings. The City claims the amendments passed to the City's Charter allows

them to do this. Perhaps, but I doubt it, and even if so, I question if the public understood the result of that amendment when we have been a volunteer council since we were first incorporated as a City. I would also question if the Council should be allowed to determine the amount of their own wages. One of the "Where as" on the face of the ordinance creating the Council Stipend states that they had reviewed the budget and there was enough money available to pay the Council. Not a good reason to do so.

As for the need to raise the planning fees by such a huge percentage I found the following figures in recent budgets.

2008/2009 The 2007 /2008 budget figures for the Planning sub fund of the General Fund, after Personal Costs of \$80,494 dollars show that the Materials and Supplies are budgeted at \$7,300.00. These are the expenditures necessary to perform the services required by the planning actions and permits. The Planning fees charged for these services are deposited into the General Fund, and in the current year this income is estimated at \$15,000 dollars. For the year ending in 2007 was \$16,168 dollars and the year ending in 2006 was \$16,759 dollars These figures actually show that the General Fund made a profit on planning fee's charged in relation to materials and supplies expenditures necessary to perform the planning services, and without the massive increase just passed. But perhaps the previous amounts did not bring in enough profit? Remember the increased fees go into the General Fund.

The City of Rockaway Beach recently went two years without an audit and the City of Tillamook City did the same thing shortly before Rockaway did. Anyway, An audit only verifies the amounts and totals, the Council and the public must be the watch dog to ascertain if the money is being spent as is determined by ordinance and Charter restrictions.

We have excellent people on the Budget and other committees and the Council members have the best interests of the City at heart, and many good staff people so what is to be done? We need more participation by the public for sure. One or two people such as my self often receive only the anger of staff and disgruntled expressions of the Council for delaying the meeting. As much as I like to refer to Tillamook as my city it is yours also, and it is our money.

Don Hurd