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Council makes right decision for wrong reason

Before planning consultant hired, decisions need to be made about protecting our (billion-dollar?) investment; council needs to pick direction and lead not follow

By JOHN FEARING

Editor
(NOTE: Most of this column was written two weeks ago, before I even knew the city was talking about hiring a planning consultant. Had I been able, I would have been at council's meeting last Thursday evening, and spoken against hiring anyone to form an economic development plan for Eagle Lake. Council made the decision not to seek a consultant on its own; that was the right decision for the wrong reason.)

The real reason is that council has not made a decision on its role in our community. When council talks us how it intends to create our government, then we can make suggestions. Otherwise, all of us are failing our arms without direction.

Here is the column as written two weeks ago:

I have a charge for our new city council: a charge that will answer their questions for years to come and bail them out of sticky situations that surely are to arise. Some time ago I began forming thoughts of why there

seemed to be so many business and financial people in Eagle Lake making unfattering comments about city government. Answering the question "why" is not easy.

The air has somewhat cleared from the spring elections and the thinly veiled airport bond "election," so perhaps it is time to begin looking at city government operations and wondering what we can expect.

The first thing to note is that the city spends more than a million dollars a year to operate the city: hard assets and investments in the community (streets, etc.) probably amount to a billion dollars or more.

My point in that statement is to show that what may be a small, rural center of living for a few families, but we are a large corporation in terms of financial health.

Protecting that financial health is the concern of all taxpayers. But, understanding how that is protected should be of even greater concern. How many people in this town know how the city plans to do this year, beyond the street bond paying program? I would venture to guess the response would be "nothing, just like in the past." Because I attend most council meetings, I know that is not true.

In other words, the real question is "what is the philosophy of operation of the Eagle Lake City Government?" What plan do we work on as the city makes decisions at each council meeting? Is our city government a caretaker operation that is reactive to, or ignorant of

the needs a government fulfills, or should the government be a reagent... one that is a catalyst for our future?

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from any corporation that has revenues and assets as our city, is that city council, the mayor and city manager.

Why all this work? The city needs to take a direction: become active rather than re-active. I think council and mayor may feel better about their jobs then, since they will be faced with far fewer "wants" sprung on them, like the airport. Everyone knows there is no money in the budget for airport work. We knew it more than three years ago when we first discussed it. With a written planning process, we would have more clearly seen the funds shortage.

From that information, a realistic budget can be established. Along the way adjustments can be made; if the

budget is too high, adjust the written plan, and so on.

And made some moves to provide future funding, if it was adopted in the plan. As it is, we ignored the situation until it was forced into the public mind, and nothing has been, or probably will be, done.

Yes, council can use planning; but, it must be planning initiated by council, and not offered in a booklet that council doesn't try to understand or implement. It must be planning in a direction that council, elected by the people, must decide to take.

A council that does no direction, and takes nothing, is not a council I can be proud of!

called for an August 6 special session for budget cuts, not tax issues. White is relying on lawmakers to work the details. Insiders say the state can raise \$1 billion by nuking agency cuts and reducing the cigarette tax from 15 to 10 cents.

Elizabeth Tammann League, 6-30-86. Speaker targeted. Lewis holds that since private industry has made cuts, state government should do likewise, and be hauled at the early retirement of over 5,000 state employees to balance the budget.

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