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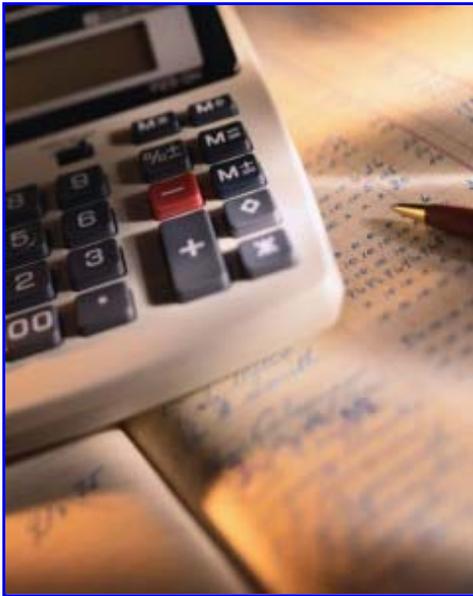


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# Water information is finally flowing, so what about rates?

November 13, 2010



It has been made clear by Lafayette voters that water is a pressing issue in the city.

Mayor Chris Heisler and some council leaders have made it a priority over the past year to uncover the facts and bring information on Lafayette's water issues to the surface.

This is why a water task force was personally formed by the Mayor early this year, and why Lafayette leaders decided recently to develop the water investigation into a formalized city-sanctioned committee.

## **Who is the Water Committee?**

The Water Committee consists of five volunteer residents that met the qualifications the Mayor was looking for, were approved by the City Council in September, and offered their expertise and time to serve the city with no cost to tax payers.

The Water Committee unanimously selected Chris Harper as the Chair.

Harper is a retired Navy Commander currently employed by the Army Corps of Engineers. He has a Bachelor and Master's degree in Mechanical Engineering and is a Licensed Professional Engineer.

Harper has experience working with water systems and wells. In his career, he has practiced as an engineer and been a manager of engineers among other responsibilities in both public and private industry.

The other committee members are also experienced enough to review and understand the complications of Lafayette's water issues.

Richard Olson, a general contractor certified in septic systems, along with experience in underground utilities and water retention projects, was named Vice Chair of the committee.

Todd Holt, who is a member of the city's Planning Commission, has seen the city's water infrastructure, and met with Public Works staff. Holt seems to know the ins and outs of water systems, water debt and improving infrastructure.

Holt is a former dairy farmer of 15 years, but also spent seven years serving as a volunteer for a Tillamook water district. Holt stated that after touring the facility, his initial impression was that the city's water resources "are poorly managed."

Two other committee members are Gordon Cook and Trevor Higby.

Higby is a business owner with experience in budgeting and is also a member of Lafayette's Budget Committee. Higby's role in the Water Committee is to help with the overall finances regarding the water debt and revenue and work to bring rate relief to the residents.

Cook was also appointed by the Mayor because of his extensive experience. Cook managed the sewer utilities, including budgeting, for the city of Eugene for 12 years.

### **What are the goals of the Water Committee and what about rates?**

Mayor Chris Heisler has been criticized and even accused of lying by some, for stating publicly that the city has collected hundreds of thousands more per year above what is required to pay the city's water debt and operating costs of the water and sewer facilities.

Mayor Heisler has stated that the city has been spending on capital improvement projects without citizen knowledge or approval for years.

With a new council leadership, Heisler says he is excited to finally have a Committee that is working to scrutinize all of the city's water projects and future needs, and work to answer his question on rates: "How much excess being collected is enough to prepare for the city's future infrastructure needs?"

Heisler believes the new Water Committee and the city's new leadership are united with him in having serious discussions to bring rate relief to the citizens and get to the bottom of the amount of expenses that are being buried in the utility rates.

Heisler stated, "The government has been collecting a huge excess above what is needed and approved by voters. Now we need to scrutinize all the water projects that have been planned as well as the \$2 million dollars in the city's unappropriated funds and realign the budget to bring relief to residents."

"I am fully committed to doing what I can, and I finally believe I have other leaders, including Water Committee members, that support me in this."

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Water Committee Chair Chris Harper gave a presentation at the November council meeting to provide a summary of the objectives and progress so far of the committee.

Harper stated the goals of the Water Committee are to maximize the use of our current resources and find effective low cost opportunities to increase water production and storage capabilities.

The government has been collecting a huge excess above what is needed and approved by voters. Now we need to scrutinize all the water projects that have been planned as well as the \$2 million dollars in the city's unappropriated funds and realign the budget to bring relief to residents. I want to get to the bottom of the amount of expenses that are being buried in the utility rates. — *Mayor Heisler*

They plan to “review all of Lafayette’s production assets and storage facilities to ensure they are providing the maximum benefit to the city.”

Harper stated that the Committee plans to “develop a comprehensive capital improvement plan and budget, and review water system costs and rates for the purpose of recommending future rate structure and relief.”

The Water Committee has been meeting for two months and has had five sessions. He said, “We’ve looked at a lot of data, City Hall has provided a lot of data, but a lot of data is still needed.” Harper provided a list of items the Committee requested and is waiting for.

A summary of Harper’s handout is provided below.

### **Where can all the water information be found on this website?**

NewLafayette.org is committed to posting water information as it is made public. All past and present water articles are posted under the ‘City Hall’ tab under ‘Water.’

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Goals of Lafayette Water Committee**

**To maximize the use of our current resources and find effective low cost opportunities to increase our production and storage capabilities.**

#### **Methods:**

A) Review all of Lafayette’s production and storage facilities:

**OBJECTIVES - Review of all currently developed assets to ensure they are providing the maximum benefit to the city.**

- a) What are the production capabilities of each of our current resources?
- b) What are our water rights and agreements?
- c) What is the best format to monitor and report monthly production and storage?
- d) What can be done to improve production rates/usefulness of the under performing resources?
- e) What processes and procedures should we have in place to standardize operations during normal, drought and emergency conditions?

**ACTIONS - Areas currently under review for improvement:**

- a) Wells No. 2, 5 in Dayton well field. — Obtaining design capacities and measured flow rates.

We need to know each well’s capabilities so we also know when the operators are not getting the most out of these wells. This will also give us an early indicator of emerging problems.

- b) Final Test results for Well 4 — same reasoning as above.
- c) Look at the potential of adding emergency fire flow by utilizing the Dayton shared reservoir.

Our current plan to maximize fire flows does not include the water rights we have to the shared reservoir. Cur-

rent reservoir pump capacity is estimated at 1,000 gpm. Review potential and obtain estimate to increase the size of the two supply pumps and controlling them with VFDs so that these larger pumps can efficiently provide for our daily requirements and increase their ability to support emergency events.

d) Determine how we measure success of the ASR project. What are the potential pay-offs and costs of ASR and what are the measurements that will be used to gauge success.

e) Standardize production and storage reporting format that is provided to city council. Format to be provided to City Administrator for use. Will require comments of staff and Council to finalize.

f) Track water sample results for Lafayette spring. Spring water samples have not yet cleared after repairs. There have been many samples taken but no one has reviewed to determine if the water samples are trending positive. Determine new capacity of spring.

**OBJECTIVES** — Review of Lafayette's prior utilized water resources, water rights and plans to identify potential low cost options to increase production and storage capabilities.

**ACTIONS — Areas currently under review:**

a) City Park Well— The well once provided 45 gpm (1.8M gallons per month) and was utilized in the summer months to provide for peak demand. Obtain estimates to refurbish and guarantee water purity.

b) Doug Nelson/Lafayette Springs – Transfer/modify water rights between two assets so that we can obtain additional spring water from the recently repaired Lafayette spring. City Administrator to write point paper on this.

c) Review past plans to construct a reservoir within city limits. Review cost estimates and engineering arguments.

B) Develop a comprehensive Capital Improvement Plan and Budget.

C) Review Water system costs and rates for the purpose of recommending future rate structure and relief.

**Requests of the water committee for information that has not yet been provided:**

1) City Park Well effluent test results. (Now provided.)

2) Shared Reservoir effluent pump rated capacities.

3) Copy of ASR Statement of Work Solicitation, Proposal and Contract.

4) Results of discussion with city engineer on design considerations for developing fire pump capability from shared reservoir.

5) Copy of cities Water Management and Conservation Plan.

6) Discussion with Dayton on why our pump No. 2 and their broken pump No. 1 are the first to turn on when the reservoir controls call for water. When our production is always in excess of what we use and their always in a deficit balance.

7) City Engineer promised the control scheme for our wells in Dayton Prairie.

😬 GSI Capacity tests for Wells No. 2 and 5.

9) Weekly/Monthly water production reports per provided spreadsheet.

10) Meeting minutes for all but first meeting have not been provided.

11) Results of discussions with city engineer that Lafayette should be able to claim half of the water in the joint reservoir for fire flow purposes.

12) Results of discussions with GSI on the fact that city personnel did not properly test well No. 4 and that the stated maximum capacity of the well is probably significantly under-reported.

13) City Administrator to provide point paper for transferring water rights from Doug Nelson spring to Lafayette spring.

14) City Administrator to obtain chlorine stay time requirements for determining storage needs at city park well.

This entry was posted on November 13, 2010 at 10:56 am and is filed under [Feature](#), [Water](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#) feed.

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Fog 45°F 

Sun 

56/51

Mon 

57/49

Tue 

53/42

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