‘You Can’t Just Do One Thing’

Dan Kirkman keeps busy sweeping, scooping, and flying flags.

When Dan Kirkman moved to Grants Pass in 1990, he didn’t waste time getting to work.

“When you move to Grants Pass, you can’t just do one thing. You just start working,” said Kirkman.

He started as a painter who could also do sandblasting to remove unwanted surfaces prior to the paint job. He purchased his first sweeper truck to help clean up the sand after blasting jobs were completed.

It wasn’t long before Kirkman started providing street sweeping, parking lot sweeping, striping, asphalt repair, and sand blasting to meet his clients’ needs under the umbrella of his business, Advanced Maintenance Services.

Kirkman said he picked up his first sweeping jobs by offering free striping or free power-washing to new parking lot customers.

In 1996, the City of Grants Pass started efforts to privatize some city services, and it began with city street sweeping.

Kirkman was told he would be an alternate in case something went wrong. “You just start working,” he said. “I’ve never been afraid to do it. I’ve just wired to do it.”

He won the bid and was granted a one-year trial contract.

Today, Advanced Maintenance Services sweeps approximately 5,000 curb miles of city streets each year. The most recent contract renewal for their services was signed April 24, 2017, and runs until June 30, 2022.

It requires three sweeper trucks to cover Grants Pass today. During the fall when the leaves are thick, two trucks must work in tandem to handle the loads. Kirkman said a third truck must be maintained as an alternate in case something goes wrong.

“The more high-tech the trucks get, the smaller the things that can go wrong to shut one down,” said Kirkman.

Keeping up with truck maintenance can be just as difficult as keeping up with the leaves, he said. “It’s such a destructive piece of equipment, it can break down,” Kirkman said.

That can be a nuisance to Kirkman and city residents alike at the same time. In the fall, especially in areas of the city with old-growth trees, keeping up with the leaves requires one truck to come through and sweep up the major piles, while the second truck must be maintained as an alternate in case something goes wrong.

In a recent speech before global leaders, Pakistani student Sania Haider Shikoh called upon adults to discontinue referring to young people as the future.

“We are the present, and we are relevant,” proclaimed Shikoh.

Grants Pass is known for its population of retirees, but 24 percent of the community’s members are under the age of 18, indicating that here, young people are not just the city’s future, but its present.

In the era of social media, activism on the part of young people has become more visible. In Flint, Mich., 10-year-old Mari Copeny became a leading voice in that community’s fight for clean drinking water.

In Grants Pass, last month’s celebration of Drinking Water Week included high accolades for the city’s long-standing commitment to providing clean, reliable drinking water to its residents.

Attention was also given to the preservation and appreciation of the Rogue River as the source of that water, and outreach efforts to emphasize the importance of a safe and secure supply of water to a community.

The mayor issued a proclamation, and local youth were invited to enter their original artwork in a Drinking Water Week poster contest (see subsequent story). The city’s Public Works Department also created a special webpage filled with water-oriented educational resources for parents to use while conducting school from home.

In the interest of further engaging with local youth, GP Now conducted a discussion with some local students to test their “water sense,” and receive their input about water conservation efforts. In the theme of the popular television show, “Are You Smarter Than A 5th Grader?” the students were asked a series of water-sense questions (see sidebar). The students also discussed the importance of water to the community, and ways to enhance water awareness and conservation efforts.

Based on their responses, the students of Grants Pass are a water-savvy group. Each of the students demonstrated an understanding of the planet’s scarcity of fresh water, the finite aspect of the resource, and the very real possibility that the water in a drinking cup today may be the same water sipped on by dinosaurs centuries ago.

“It’s so cool that we’re drinking water that dinosaurs could...” (See “YOUTH” page 8)
Grants Pass is a strategically motivated municipality whose direction is annually defined and affirmed by the mayor and city council through a series of goal statements that reflect the values of the community. The council establishes the goals used to formulate our Strategic Plan.

This year, “Keep Citizens Safe” remained as the first goal of the Strategic Plan, as it has been and continues to be the city’s top priority.

The Strategic Plan serves as the foundation upon which the budget is developed. Through the strategic planning process, the council prioritized the potential work plan items that will help the city make those goals and objectives a reality.

The city’s budget places an emphasis on the higher priority work plan items in the 2020-2021 Strategic Plan as prioritized by the city council. Financial resources, if required, are provided to various projects and objectives identified as high priorities by the council, and resources are assigned to operating divisions based on service level expectations communicated by our citizens and council. Staffing recommendations also closely follow these service level expectations.

Thanks to citizen support and successful past financial planning, council directed staff to present a budget that will provide the same level of service for all operating divisions this year.

With limited growth in our resources, expected cost inflation pressures in the area of personnel and many of the most routine operational expenditures, general direction also included the need to hold the line where possible on personnel and other expenditures.

Our city budget is primarily made up of three main pieces: General Fund, Enterprise Funds, and Capital Improvement Funds. There are also some special revenue funds that collect certain restricted revenues, and some internal service funds that provide support services to city operating and capital programs.

The General Fund makes up 28 percent of the city’s fiscal year 2020-21 recommended budget. The General Fund is made up primarily of property tax revenue, state-shared revenue, franchise (right-of-way) taxes on utilities, and various licenses, permits, and fines.

Approximately 67 percent of the General Fund revenue comes from property tax revenue, made up of both a permanent rate and a local option levy - all of which is dedicated exclusively to our Public Safety divisions.

The General Fund also finances many other basic services, including Parks and Recreation, Community Development, and others.

The General Fund contains the city’s only discretionary revenue sources, which currently account for annual revenues of approximately $5.4 million (19 percent of General Fund revenue) that are shared by all General Fund programs.

Close to 32 percent of the city’s total 2020-21 budget comes from Enterprise Funds, which include our Water and Wastewater Utilities. Hardly any tax dollars support the Enterprise Funds because they are designed to be self-supporting through user fees.

Users of these programs pay fees that support all the costs associated with delivering these services, and it is important to note that these fees cannot be used for any other purpose.

Capital Construction Funds account for approximately 15 percent of the total budget. Special revenue funds such as Transportation, Lodging Taxes, and others account for approximately 8 percent of the budget, and the remainder of the total budget comes from Debt Service Funds, Internal Service Funds, and the Trust Fund.

The worldwide COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on certain types of city revenue sources. The pandemic has had a severe effect on the city’s Lodging Tax revenues this year, and that is now reflected in the recommended budget for 2020-21.

Lodging Tax revenue projections for the coming year have been reduced by 30 percent in comparison to what the preliminary projections were before the pandemic.

This will impact tourism promotion by approximately $153,000, and other General Fund operating revenues by $278,000 for the coming year.

Tourism Lodging Tax revenues that were previously transferred to a capital project in the amount of $150,000 are now recommended to be returned to the General Fund Tourism Promotion division in order to keep the division whole during this temporary halt in travel activities.

City utility revenues and right-of-way privilege tax revenues in the General Fund will also be slightly impacted from having slightly less local economic activity during this temporary emergency. There is also expected to be a modest short-term effect on gas tax revenue sharing from the state.

Gas tax revenues have been reduced by $200,000, compared to preliminary revenue estimates generated before the pandemic (See “BUDGET” page 10).
Building On His Experience

City Councilor DJ Faszer brings construction experience to City Hall.

Grants Pass City Councilor DJ Faszer credits former Grants Pass mayor, now Josephine County Commissioner Darin Fowler with inspiring him to volunteer for a city council seat. Fowler knows Faszer through their mutual careers in the construction industry.

“Darin fostered the interest in me,” said Faszer.

Faszer said Fowler asked him to meet at City Hall. The two men visited the City Council Chambers, and Fowler encouraged Faszer to run for one of two seats coming open on the council that year.

Faszer was elected to fill a half-term seat in November 2018.

“It wasn’t a sure thing. I was delighted to have won,” said Faszer.

Faszer said he was always intrigued with the workings of local government, and that helped fashion his decision.

“Being a builder, and being aware of the processes of local government and how it works, I always found it interesting,” he said.

Faszer has been in construction work all of his life. The son of a son of a builder, is as comfortable on a job site, as he is in Council Chambers.

This November, voters will decide on who will fill the next full term of the seat Faszer currently holds. Whether or not Faszer will be a candidate is still undecided, he said.

“It’s something I think about every day,” said Faszer. “It would be difficult to walk away from.”

Faszer enjoys putting his professional expertise to work when serving as a councilor. As the council’s liaison to the city’s Housing Advisory Committee, he believes his experience as a builder has helped the commission with “making headway.”

“Working with the Housing Advisory Committee has been very fulfilling for me,” Faszer said.

Recent decisions regarding the city’s transitional housing codes are another gratifying outcome during Faszer’s tenure on the council, he said.

“Overcoming the challenges of the hurdles with regards to transitional housing, and addressing the needs of the community, while being thorough in the process, was very rewarding,” said Faszer.

It hasn’t all been straight lumber and true cuts along the way, while trying to work a full-time job and serve as a councilor at the same time, says the experienced builder.

“The time commitment is real to be an effective council member,” Faszer said.

The amount of commitment varies with regard to the magnitude of the decisions which need to be made, he said.

“This has not been an easy couple of years when it comes to the weight of the decisions.

City Seeks Qualified 911 Dispatcher for Public Safety

The City of Grants Pass seeks a positive role model to be a 911 dispatcher who is ethical, supportive to council goals, innovative, is receptive to ideas and opinions, and focuses on the betterment of the individual, organization, and community.

Successful applicants will have strong keyboarding skills, outstanding interpersonal and judgment skills, and the ability to multi-task during intense situations and high-volume workloads.

Incumbents are responsible for answering emergency 911 and non-emergency telephone calls, while directing appropriate and timely resources. Responsibilities include prioritizing calls, tracking unit status, and dispatching emergency personnel to crime scenes and calls for service.

After applications are reviewed, selected applicants will be scheduled to take the Critical Call test between June 8 and June 18. Selected applicants will then be scheduled for a 2-hour live observation in our Dispatch Center. Interviews are scheduled to take place Wednesday, June 24.

Prior to submitting an application, all prospective applicants are encouraged to view this video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=497u-MOa8oq0.

The video gives a general overview of what a 911 dispatcher can expect the day-to-day tasks to be. This is a representation of a communications center like the one at the Grants Pass Department of Public Safety.

Our Public Safety Department is a 24-7 operation and all candidates will be required to work nights, weekends, rotating shifts and holidays.

Lateral Incentives Available

To qualify, lateral dispatchers must have at least 24 months of satisfactory police, fire, or emergency medical dispatching experience.

Lateral Dispatchers must be either Oregon DPSST certified, or certified with another state or county or state agency.

Lateral dispatchers with full-time qualified experience may be eligible to start at a higher pay scale. Lateral dispatchers will serve a 12-month probationary period.

(See “FASZER” page 11)
Jon Brandt: GP City Mapmaker

Grants Pass GIS Technician Jon Brandt admits “a lot of people don’t know what GIS is or what it does.”

A geographic information system is a framework for gathering, managing, and analyzing data that is rooted in the science of geography (see sidebar page 9).

“To me, it’s absolutely anything you can map – on the face of the earth, under the earth, or even beyond,” said Brandt.

Brandt has been the city’s mapmaker since November 2018. He says he “stumbled into” the field after obtaining a bachelor’s degree in geography with the intent of becoming a teacher. When that didn’t work out, he called upon his degree and previous construction experience to first work in the field as a surveyor.

Later, he landed in Tyler, Texas, where he served as a surveyor.

“In my last position, it was up to me and my assistant to do much of the field work,” said Brandt.

That work often called upon Brandt to endure the forests and thick undergrowth of East Texas, where the threat of poisonous snakes and feral hogs was very real.

“The locals always told me to watch out for them, but none of those things ever worried me as much as mosquitos,” Brandt said. “After living in Texas for 11 years, I realized not everything there is bigger, but the mosquitos were!”

Ultimately, Brandt, his wife of nearly 20 years, and their two children, now ages 12 and 15, returned to Oregon to be closer to family. At first, he went back to construction working for a local contractor for about a year, but when the opportunity came to put his GIS experience to work for Grants Pass, Brandt said he knew it was the job for him.

“It was everything I knew it would be,” he said.

Keeping up with technological changes can be one of the more challenging aspects of managing GIS. Global GIS software provider, Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI), launched major updates in nearly 130 countries.

(See “BRANDT” page 9)

Gwen Luhring is a charter member of Soroptimist International of River Valley. She is one of 25 women who originally established the branch of the international service organization here in Grants Pass. Today, she continues to serve as the club treasurer, and is one of three remaining original members.

“I was newly retired and new to the area, and I wanted to meet other women in the community, while also serving the community,” said Luhring.

When she saw an article in a local newspaper announcing a formation meeting of a Grants Pass chapter, Luhring attended and got on board to assist the formation efforts, she said.

Soon, the Soroptimist International of River Valley was formed, and this year, the chapter celebrates 20 years of service to the local community.

Luhring said the early challenge of forming the River Valley chapter involved navigating through the various personalities of the 25 women who first formed the chapter.

“Bringing together 25 women who don’t know each other very well – it was awkward through that ‘getting to know you period of time,’” said Luhring.

“Finding a balance was important,” she said.

Over the years, Luhring and fellow charter members, Linda Garrick and Ginny Smith, have seen close to 70 different members come through the chapter.

“Some have passed away. Some have moved away, and some have had life changes over the years,” Luhring said.

Today, their membership stands at 23 active members from the local community who work together to improve the lives of women and children, volunteer at local events, and share a fellowship with each other through their meetings and social activities.

Soroptimist International was first formed in 1921. The global organization is the world’s largest women’s service organization with 80,000 members forming active chapters in nearly 130 countries.

The River Valley chapter has always been focused on education, said Luhring. What started as their Women’s Opportunity Award has now become their annual Live Your Dream Award, which provides cash awards to local women who are trying to better themselves and their families.

They need support, better education, and job training,” said Luhring.

Each year, the chapter awards $3,000 between two Dream Award recipients, as well as three separate $1,000 scholarships for women to attend Rogue Community College.

Two of the scholarships are named in memoriam for charter member Vera Quimby and her husband, Mel.

“Vera was known as the ‘Queen of Grants Pass,’” said Luhring.

When it came to obtaining sponsorships and rallying volunteers, “nobody could say ‘no’ to Vera,” Luhring said.

Mel Quimby passed away

(See “SOROPTIMIST” page 10)
No Smoking In Cars With Minor Occupants

The Grants Pass Department of Public Safety reminds residents that in Oregon, it is unlawful to smoke, vape, or aerosolize in a motor vehicle if the vehicle contains occupants under 18 years of age [Oregon Revised Statutes (ORS): 811.193, 431A.175].

This includes inhaling, exhaling, burning, or carrying a lit cigarette, cigar or pipe, and/or using an inhalant delivery device.

Having the vehicle’s windows down is not an excuse or exemption from the law, and motorists are still in violation of this statute regardless of the air circulation within their vehicle.

Violation of the law is a Class D traffic violation for a first offense, and a Class C traffic violation for a second or subsequent offense. [2013 c.361 §2; 2015 c.158 §12].

Oregon is one of eight U.S. states to enact legislation of this nature.

In 1962, President John F. Kennedy proclaimed May 15 as National Peace Officers Memorial Day and the calendar week in which May 15 falls, as National Police Week. National Police Week is a collaborative effort of many organizations dedicated to honoring America’s law enforcement community.

Every year, the Grants Pass Department of Public Safety, Josephine County Sheriff’s Office and Oregon State Police celebrate National Police Week by honoring fallen heroes from the county and the country through presenting an honor guard and the lowering of the U.S. flag to half-mast.

This has always been an annual event that was open to the public, but due to state-mandated social distancing requirements, this year’s event had to be canceled.

In lieu of the public ceremony, the Department of Public Safety honored fallen heroes through an active social media campaign throughout the week.

Citizens who wanted to honor fallen officers were also invited to visit the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund website and participate in a virtual Candlelight Vigil Wednesday, May 13. For more information, visit: https://nleomf.org/

Sgt. Jeff Gaunt Goes Above & Beyond the Call of Duty

Ward Warren received a call from Sgt. Jeff Gaunt of the Grants Pass Department of Public Safety Monday, May 4, reporting damage to a plate glass window in a storefront of a building owned by Warren.

“He said that it appeared someone had kicked it in, breaking both the glass window out as well as a wood security covering,” said Warren.

Gaunt wondered if someone had crawled inside the store in an effort to steal items within. Warren was not immediately available to respond to the site, so he asked Gaunt to send him a photo of the damage.

“Within minutes, I got the photo and told him that I didn't think they had likely stolen anything as most of what is currently inside is larger items that wouldn't fit through that hole, and that I would get in town the next day to repair it,” Warren said.

A few hours later, Warren received another photo on his phone showing a board placed over the damaged window and covering the hole.

“Warren said he was in disbelief.

“I texted back and asked if that was a real repair or a Photoshopped version of the original photo,” said Warren.

Gaunt replied that when he finished his shift, he went to his home and retrieved a left-over piece of plywood, and the tools required to use the wood to patch cover the hole.

“I was like, ‘Wow Jeff, thank you, I don't even know what to say...you're a good man,’” said Warren.

Later that evening Warren posted about the incident on a private Facebook group regarding Grants Pass.

“The post got more positive responses than any previous post I've seen on the group’s page,” said Warren.
Drinking Water Week Poster Contest Winners
Drinking Water Poster Contest

As part of National Drinking Water Week celebrations, Grants Pass youth were invited to submit hand-drawn, original art posters celebrating the Rogue River as the city’s water source, building water awareness, and promoting water conservation.

The contest was open to students, grades K-12. Prizes and gift cards were awarded to the participants. This summer, the winners will also have their art featured on Josephine Community Transit buses. In addition, each participant will be invited to attend a recognition ceremony at a meeting of the City Council.

Frequently Asked Questions: A New Water Treatment Plant

As the city moves forward with the crucial process of building a new Water Treatment Plant to serve its residents, many residents have contacted City Hall with questions about the need for the new plant, the overall process used to determine the best location for the new plant, and the future process of constructing a plant that will serve Grants Pass for the next 100 years.

The staff of GP Now compiled a list of frequently asked questions, and went to Public Works Director Jason Canady for the answers. Canady spent nearly 20 years working at the current plant and he is the city’s preeminent expert on the status of the aging facility.

GP Now: Do we really need a new Water Treatment Plant?
Canady: The existing Water Treatment Plant will turn 90 years old next year. As the building ages, the concrete is beginning to fail because the minerals that make the concrete strong are deteriorating. The building is at a high-risk of failure in even a moderate earthquake, not considering a Cascadia Subduction zone scale event.

If that were to happen, the community would likely be without a supply of safe drinking water for years. Staff would likely be able to implement emergency strategies which would allow the population to collect safe drinking water at limited distribution points, but it would take extensive work to be able to return to distributing water to each home and business.

GP Now: Why was the J Street property ultimately selected as the location for a new plant?
(See “PLANT” page 11)

Duckling Rescue!

Grants Pass Public Works received an urgent call Wednesday, May 13, from a citizen who reported that a mother duck had been standing near a city storm drain inlet for two days. The citizen reported the mother duck had lost her ducklings through the grate of the inlet, and they were trapped inside.

The inlet is located at the intersection of Prospect and Manzanita avenues.

City Streets Crew member Craig Kight and Streets Superintendent Shelly Stichter dispatched to the location to assess the situation. They discovered 13 little ducklings trapped inside the inlet.

“Fortunately, the inlet was shallow, and we were able to remove the grate,” said Stichter.

All was well when the mother duck led her rescued ducklings to the nearby creek (rescue photos to the right show Kight reaching into the inlet to retrieve the ducklings).

“Be like a duck, paddling and working very hard inside the water, but what everyone sees is a smiling and calm face.”
— Manoj Arora

Poster Winner Art

Opposite page:
Top row, left to right - Atticus Frost, Ava Phelan, Ethan Brayman.
Row two - Holly Sedivy, Ivy Elseth, Juliet Saldivar.
Row three - Kaya Cowles, Mark Astry, Morgan Wehmann.
Row four - Natalie Astry, Olive Elseth, Peach Gerber.
This page: Preston G. M.
Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader?

GP Now asked some local students a few basic questions to test their knowledge of water resources and conservation:

1. When is the best time of day to water your lawn?
   a. Morning/evening
   b. Afternoon
   c. All day long

2. Which of these ways to wash a car saves the most water?
   a. Driveway wash with hose
   b. Drive it into a lake
   c. Car wash that recycles water

3. It’s not important to save water because there is so much of it on earth.
   a. True
   b. False

4. Which uses less water washing dishes?
   a. Fully loaded dishwasher
   b. Washing under the tap

5. It’s okay to flush some trash down the toilet like tissues or cotton balls.
   a. True
   b. False

6. Which of the following uses less water?
   a. Taking a 5-minute shower
   b. Taking a bath

ANSWERS: 1. a, 2. c., 3 b., 4. a, 5. b, 6. a

Youth...(from page 1)

Chloe DeCourcey, grade 7.

The students indicated hydration and handwashing were at the top of the list of their uses of water, followed by recreational uses and other forms of personal hygiene, such as baths and showers. Using water for animals and gardens joined washing cars and doing laundry as other major uses.

Josiah Saldivar, grade 1, and his sister, Juliet Saldivar, grade 6, said they like to use water for filling water balloons.

Oregonians are fortunate to have easy access to some of the safest treated water in the world. The young respondents expressed deep appreciation for their access to safe water after learning that in some developing countries, families get their water from a community well.

In those countries, it is often the children’s job to transport water from the well to their home.

“If we had to do that, we’d have to go every hour to get water. We wouldn’t be able to go to school,” said Mark Astry, grade 8.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) indicates that more than 780 million people across the globe do not have access to an improved water source. Approximately 35 percent of those also lack improved sanitation.

“We need clean water to keep people from getting infected from dirty water. We need clean water to live,” said Astry.

After adding up how much water their own families might need (300-600 gallons per family per day), the students calculated how long it would take them to carry buckets of water back and forth to their homes.

They observed that water conservation would become essentially important. Daily activities most families take for granted would no longer be possible. It was difficult for them to even imagine following public health recommendations for consistent handwashing.

“Just talking about it makes me more appreciative,” said Natalie Astry, grade 11. “Knowing that we have clean water helps me know I won’t get sick.”

Chloe DeCourcey, grade 7, agreed. She emphasized how important it is to take care of freshwater resources and eliminate pollution. She and the other respondents came to the conclusion that without fresh water, local restaurants and businesses simply could not operate.

“Access to clean drinking water is essential to Grants Pass,” said DeCourcey.

Next, the students were asked about the importance of building public awareness about clean water and water conservation. All agreed that it is a conversation more people should be having.

“Water can help you grow,” said Josiah Saldivar.

Each of the respondents had their own ideas about questions to ask adults to help raise their awareness of the importance of water. Most of them wanted to ask adults if they were aware of how much water they actually use each day. They also had some important advice to give.

“Think about how much water you’re using. Don’t waste water. Use it wisely,” said Juliet Saldivar.

“Don’t be wasteful. Don’t overwater your lawn, and don’t take 40-minute showers,” said DeCourcey.

Maintaining the city’s water infrastructure was also important to the students. The cost of water was another major topic they discussed.

It is important to invest in a new water treatment system, said Natalie Astry. “Even if it costs a little extra money, it’s important that it’s safe for us. We should focus on fixing it,” she said.

“Don’t overdo using water. Just because you’re paying doesn’t mean you can over-use it,” said Mark Astry.

Additional questions from the students were directed to staff at the city’s aging Water Treatment Plant. Respondents were invited to take a tour of the 90-year-old plant once state-mandated social distancing requirements are lifted and tours of the plant can resume.

In the meantime, these young residents of Grants Pass proved to be strong advocates for improving water awareness and conservation efforts.

“All the water on earth is all we have,” said Josiah Saldivar.
revisions to their platform and the company is discontinuing support of its older systems, said Brandt. Within the last six months, the city has had to catch up with the conversion to the new platform, he said. “Keeping everything running smoothly is a challenge,” Brandt said.

Every city department, and nearly every city employee uses GIS in some form or another, either through direct interface with ESRI software, or using a city application built in-house. Parks and Community Development and the city’s Public Works Department use the system the most, said Brandt (see graphic).

“It’s really split down the middle between planning and public works, but the police department relies heavily on it too,” Brandt said.

In order to keep all levels of the system functioning correctly, Brandt works very closely with the city Information Technology Department, also charged with maintaining the city’s internal network security. “Whenever there’s a security update to our overall system, it can have different effects on the GIS system,” said Brandt.

Other technical issues can come in from various departments as well, he said. “It’s always guaranteed to break down at some point, so you face the challenge, determine the problem, and find a solution,” Brandt said.

Those challenges keep him on his toes. “When things break, it’s not always clear what the fix is. It keeps the job interesting, so you’re not bored, that’s for sure,” said Brandt.

Brandt says most members of the public don’t realize they also rely on GIS technology whenever they use a map viewer or positioning systems. The city also maintains several public-facing map applications such as a Tree Walk Map, Grants Pass Parks Tour, Hike, Bike, and Walk Mobile App, and Downtown Parking Map. There are 17 total publicly accessible maps available through the city website’s GIS portal.

The main Grants Pass Map Viewer is the most popularly used, receiving an average public use of 25 times per day. Brandt said the city’s Street Sweeping Map and Historic Northwest Grants Pass Map are also popular with residents. “It used to be more difficult to build these maps, and third-party contractors would have to be called in, but new platforms have made it easier for the work to be done in-house,” Brandt said.

“Keeping everything running smoothly is a challenge.”

Brandt prefers working with the Public Works applications the most. Publishing mobile applications employees can use in the field to update important information directly from the site of the change is rewarding, he said. “Being able to dial in their data with precise detail is especially rewarding,” said Brandt.

A recent project involved assisting water distribution staff with an application that helps determine the elevations of pipes, pumps, water meters, and fire hydrants to assist staff in calculating the proper pressures required to supply water to those essential parts of the city’s water system. “It’s always amazing the amount of detail and accuracy you can gather in a sort of nerdly fun way,” Brandt said.

Brandt and a temporary summer assistant, Alyssa Potts, are currently working together on mapping the city’s vegetation and tree canopies. “Recent aerial imaging has captured the near infrared band where we can readily view our vegetation,” said Brandt.

When he isn’t “nerdly” having fun making maps for the city, Brandt says he puts his construction experience to use on projects at home. Recreation includes mountain biking with his son, and playing tennis with wife, Melissa, a local dental hygienist.

“I always lose. I guess I don’t track the ball as well as I track the city’s GIS,” said Brandt.

What is GIS?

GIS is the acronym for Geographic Information System. GIS software and geographic databases (geodatabases) represent features on the earth, such as buildings, site addresses, utility systems, city boundaries, roads, etc.

GIS is a tool used by individuals and organizations, schools, governments, and businesses seeking innovative ways to solve their problems.

A GIS stores information about the world as a collection of layers that can be linked together by a common locational component such as latitude and longitude, a postal Zip code, census tract name, or road name.

These geographic references allow you to locate features on the earth’s surface for analysis of patterns and trends. Dozens of map layers can be arrayed to display information about transportation networks, hydrography, population characteristics, economic activity, and political jurisdictions.

DID YOU KNOW?

Tons of Data – The city’s GIS is comprised of seven feature data sets with a total of 193 Feature Classes or Layers. Those layers are composed of 990,233 different elements!

That doesn’t even include the swath of external data consumed from the state and federal governments, or the data maintained by the Department of Public Safety. https://grantspassoregon.maps.arcgis.com/apps/View/index.

GIS and Public Works:

Five major divisions have critical data requiring tracking and maintenance:
1. Water Distribution (Pipes, Pumps, Meters, Hydrants, etc.)
2. Stormwater Collection (Drains, Inlets, Canals, etc.)
3. Wastewater Collection (Sewer Mains, Manholes, Pump Stations, etc.)
4. Streets (Curb Gutter, Sidewalks, Street, Curb Ramps, Street Signs & Poles, Public Art, etc.)
5. Engineering (utilizes all the data above and much of their own data to collaborate with developers and capital improvement projects)

GIS and Parks & Community Development:

1. Planning (Zoning, FEMA Flood Maps, Essential Salmon Streams, Hazardous Slopes, Addresses, Parcel Maps, etc.)
2. Parks (Trails, Park Locations, Tree Inventory, etc.)
3. Building & Permitting (relies heavily on integration with GIS)
4. Property Management (Streetlights and Signs, Parking, Facilities, etc.)
Budget...(from page 2)

emergency.

With a growing City, the same level of service often requires additional staffing in certain years to keep up with the workload. The recommended 2020-21 budget includes the equivalent addition of 1.35 full-time employees this year in order to maintain current service levels.

The odd number is a result of adding a recommended full-time municipal services worker for Parks/Downtown/Property Management, and an additional property specialist in the Police Division, while also reducing one full-time employee in the Finance Department due to exceptional delivery of service efficiencies.

The City of Grants Pass is an innovative organization that is focused on value. Our mayor, city council, and city employees demonstrate a willingness to seek and create alternative solutions to problems every day.

Our staff is constantly embracing changes to our systems of operation in order to provide services to our citizens in the most effective and efficient manner possible.

I would like to acknowledge that teamwork, as well as the commitment and assistance of all, including the mayor, the council, our Budget Committee members, city staff, and participating members of our community who contributed to the preparation of both the city’s Strategic Plan and the city’s budget for the coming year.

I am particularly grateful to the entire staff of our Finance Department for their continuing commitment to excellence in municipal finance and budgeting for the benefit of our community.

Creating and maintaining a sustainable, balanced budget helps the city provide critical and quality services to our community for many years to come. If you have questions about our city budget, you can find it posted on our website: https://www.grantspassoregon.gov/210/Operating-Capital-Budget.

Please contact us if you have any additional questions.

Yours in service,

Aaron Cubic,
City Manager

Soroptimist...(from page 4)

before his beloved wife, said Luhring, and when Vera Quiymb’s health declined, the club rallied together to assist her with her needs until she also passed away. Naming scholarships in their honor was a fitting way to acknowledge their contributions to the organization.

Throughout the two-decade history of the chapter, more than 50 local women have been assisted through the Live Your Dream Awards and scholarship programs.

“Every time we give a Live Your Dream Award, it’s so rewarding, especially hearing those women’s stories, both before and after,” said Luhring.

“We see a lot of them in town being successful and doing well with their lives,” she said.

Luhring describes the chapter as a “hands-on organization,” whose members enjoy volunteering to assist others. Each year, they help the Women’s Crisis Support Team with a thorough cleaning of their facility.

“We help clean the house from top to bottom,” said Luhring.

One year, the chapter helped pay for the installation of a gazebo at the local Kairos facility for youth and young adults. Luhring said the gazebo serves as a “quiet and calming place for parents to begin reunification with their children.”

Another year, the Soroptimists donated bedding to Hearts With A Mission, and then the members went in and made up all of the beds, said Luhring.

They also assist other organizations in the community with major events, such as Back to the Fifties weekend, Fourth of July, and Concerts in the Park, where they traditionally sell snow cones and ice creams as an annual fundraiser.

“‘Every time we give a Live Your Dream Award, it’s so rewarding, especially hearing those women’s stories, both before and after.’”

Luhring said not every event or fundraising activity is continued every year. During Relay for Life one year, “sleeping in a tent on a field at the high school was interesting,” she said.

That year’s “Hero” theme inspired the Soroptimists to dress as healthcare workers.

“‘I didn’t participate overnight, but when I came back in the morning, watching them all come out of those tents, they were bedraggled. They looked like they needed healthcare workers,’” Luhring said.

Laughing and having fun together as a club is also an important aspect of being a member, said Luhring.

Activities include holiday parties, themed events, seeing plays together, and participating in dress-up days for annual conferences of the international organization.

“One year, we dressed up as fairies and gnomes. Another year, we were pirates. We have so many fun things that we do,” she said.

Every year, they host the local Chamber of Commerce morning Greeters meeting for St. Patrick’s Day. This year, it was the last live Greeters meeting before state-mandated restrictions on gatherings were put into place.

Those restrictions have precluded the Soroptimists from conducting their planned 20-year anniversary celebration and engaging in their regular fundraising activities. An event to commemorate two decades of community service planned at the Bear Hotel had to be canceled. There will be no selling of snow cones and ice creams at summer events that have also been canceled, said Luhring.

Nonetheless, the Soroptimists will continue to do their best to raise funds to keep their worthwhile programs going. Club members are working on some online fundraising options, and a button on their website allows members from the community to donate if they choose.

“The local businesses have always been so supportive. It’s a wonderful community,” said Luhring.

For additional information, visit www.soroptimistsirv.org.

The name Soroptimist was coined from the Latin soror meaning sister, and optima meaning best. And so Soroptimist is perhaps best interpreted as “the best for women.”

- Soroptimist International
Faszer... (from page 3)

we’ve had to make,” said Faszer.
That weight is a heavy burden, he said, and the level of scrutiny that comes with it, isn’t something he was used to.

“It’s sink or swim when it comes to decisions,” he said.

“At some time, that decision has to be made and you have to do your research in order to make the best decision you can,” said Faszer.

Another challenge of the role comes with the criticisms delivered after the decisions are made, and “accepting that you’re not going to please everyone,” he said.

One such decision is the recent council vote to move forward with the process of eminent domain in order to acquire a suitable location for a new water treatment plant to supply water to the city, said Faszer.

As a builder, Faszer said it was something he knew he was experienced to measure.

“I deal in real estate. This is right up my alley,” Faszer said.
As a councilor, it was a different story, he said.

“It’s the challenge of coming to the realization that the good of the entire community has to come before the individual,” said Faszer.

This time of year presents an additional challenge to Faszer. The city council is deep into the budgetary process, and he says that is the time when things can get overwhelming.

“The budget process can just swamp you. There are so many ins and outs,” he said, clarifying that there are numerous different specific funds requiring specific uses which all must be understood.

Of all the funds to be considered every year, Faszer said the process of allocating the city’s Community Development Block Grant Funds is one of the most rewarding aspects of serving on the council.

“Helping other organizations that help other people – that feels nice,” he said.

The public comment portions of city council meetings can also pose some challenges from time to time, said Faszer. Some suggestions can be “odd,” and some comments are “strange” in their appeal to the council when they are outside the purview of municipal government, he said.

“Sometimes it can be difficult to keep a straight face during contentious public comment,” Faszer said.

Other times, it can be hard not to take the comments personally, he admitted.

“We’re all volunteers trying to guide the city in the best way we see fit,” said Faszer.

Even though people can sometimes be “very passionate about the things we talk about,” Faszer said he hopes that they will try to think about what is best for Grants Pass.

“I care about this area. My family has been here for generations. I came back here after I got my education because this is the place I want to be,” Faszer said.

Plant... (from page 7)

Canady: The J Street property was selected because of its ideal location, and the owner of the property expressed an early willingness to negotiate selling the property to the city.

GP Now: Why wasn’t the Peterson property or 12th Street properties selected for the new plant?

Canady: The Peterson property was considered. The property owner was approached, and unlike the owner of the J Street property, the Peterson property owner had no interest in selling at any price.

Other properties that were considered included the city’s Skate Park, the City Yard, a group of commercial properties around the J Street location, and properties in the Spalding area. These properties were deemed inappropriate for various reasons.

Skate Park: Too small, built on a pond, and a perennial spring.

City Yard: Too expensive. A new site for the water treatment functions would need to be acquired and facilities would need to be constructed, including crew quarters for various city divisions such as Collections, Distribution, Streets, Fleet, and Property Management.

Additionally, the city would have to build a new Fleet shop, including covered and heated storage for specialized vehicles. This was a very expensive proposition.

Spalding Property: was thoroughly explored, as well as other areas outside the immediate vicinity of the existing water intake, but these were also determined to be far too expensive, adding as much as $12 million to the cost, as we would have to run very expensive piping from the Rogue River to the new plant, and then all the way back again to our distribution points.

Delivering the water to the plant for treatment, and then delivering to homes and businesses requires a very extensive distribution system. The further the water has to travel, the more expensive it becomes.

GP Now: Who made these ultimate decisions?

Canady: Staff and consultants provided multiple reports as to the desirability of various aspects of the many subject properties, but ultimately the decisions were largely made by the city council.

GP Now: Why has the location on the J Street property and number of acres required at the property changed so many times?

Canady: It began as a request for the back two parcels of the property, totaling eight acres. That was undersized, and because of the configuration of the parcels, would have made future expansion very difficult if not impossible.

The seller suggested we purchase the entire property, and we changed the request. When negotiations for the entire property came to a stand-still, we initially moved forward with the idea of exercising eminent domain for the entire property.

When that was proposed to the city council, they opted to reduce the amount of property to a size that would ensure this process will only be required once, so that in 20 years or so, we will have room to expand at a reasonable cost to the ratepayer.

The council opted to seek the east portion of the property, currently used as tractor-trailer storage, rather than the west side of the property where the owner conducts their landscape supply business. This will leave that business property intact.

GP Now: Why is the city “taking” the J Street property from the property owners?

Canady: The city is not “taking” the property from the owner. Eminent domain is the process of asking an unbiased court of law to help decide the fair-market price of the property so that the property owner is adequately compensated for the land, while the city taxpayers do not overspend for the land.

The J Street property is the best property for construction of the new Water Treatment Plant. It is in the correct location with regards to accessing the current water intake on the Rogue River, and it will serve the residents of our community for 100 years into the future.

GP Now: Why won’t the city just give the property owners the money they want?

Canady: It would be a very poor stewardship of the ratepayers’ money to pay 3-4 times more for the property than what fair market value determines it is worth.

GP Now: Why wasn’t this decision put to a public vote?

Canady: Decisions such as these are not generally subject to public vote. It truly comes down to calling upon the elected officials to make the decisions with regards to the greater public good.

We need a new plant. That is not in question. The best location for the service levels and future expansion needs of the city’s water filtration and distribution system, at the best price to the ratepayers, is the J Street location.

Ultimately a solution will be found to move forward, whether that be through continued negotiations, or the decision of the court.

“...When the well is dry, we know the worth of water.”
- Benjamin Franklin
June 14 is Flag Day

In the United States, Flag Day is celebrated on June 14. It commemorates the adoption of the flag of the United States on June 14, 1777, by resolution of the Second Continental Congress.

The United States also celebrates the U.S. Army birthday on this date; Congress adopted "the American continental army" after reaching a consensus position in the Committee of the Whole on June 14, 1775.

In 1916, President Woodrow Wilson issued a proclamation that officially established June 14 as Flag Day; on August 3, 1949, National Flag Day was established by an Act of Congress. Flag Day is not an official federal holiday.

Title 36 of the United States Code, Subtitle I, Part A, CHAP. 1, § 110[4] is the official statute on Flag Day; however, it is at the president’s discretion to officially proclaim the observance.

Other special days for flying the flag include: New Year’s Day, Inauguration Day (Jan. 20), Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday, Lincoln’s Birthday (Feb. 12), Washington’s Birthday (third Monday in February), Easter Sunday, Mother’s Day, Armed Forces Day (third Saturday in May), Memorial Day (half-staff until noon), Father’s Day (third Sunday in June), Independence Day, Labor Day (first Monday in September), Constitution Day (Sept. 17), Columbus Day (second Monday in October), Navy Day (Oct. 27), Veterans Day (Nov. 11), Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day.

Kirkman (from page 1)

truck picks up the regular street debris.

In the off-season, a single truck can sweep the streets and have to be emptied usually twice per day. In the fall, two trucks picking up the Autumn leaves can make as many as 10 trips per day to be emptied.

Wet leaves are the worst, said Kirkman. Dealing with piles in the street created by landscaping companies who use blowers, rather than trash bags, is also a challenge, he said.

Thankfully, “a lot of residents are very appreciative, especially in the fall,” said Kirkman.

Not all residents are complimentary.

Calls of complaint “come in all the time,” Kirkman said.

Most of the calls are a result of misunderstanding about how the sweeper trucks work, said Kirkman.

Sweeper trucks only make left turns to accommodate the sweeper apparatus.

“Sometimes it takes hours for a truck to get back to the street on the right” in a given route,” Kirkman said.

In January 2019, the city started posting street sweeping routes and schedules on its website. According to Jon Brandt, the city’s Geographic Information Systems technician, the city’s street sweeping map application is very popular (see subsequent story this issue).

There are 14 different sections established to cover the city’s neighborhoods and business districts on a set schedule. For instance, the downtown encompassing the Central Business District is swept every Monday morning. The full schedule is located here: https://www.grantspassoregon.gov/1113/Street-Sweeping-Schedule.

Kirkman said it is as important to hold true to street sweeping schedule as it is to hold true to his belief that in Grants Pass, “you can’t just do one thing.”

In 2000, Kirkman purchased the local Baskin-Robbins franchise, which was located at the top of Seventh St. at the time. In 2009, he moved the store to 300 Union Ave.

After 20 years, he said his favorite flavor is still chocolate chip.

The site of the ice cream shop is perhaps most famous for being the home of what Kirkman says is the tallest flagpole flying the largest American flag in all of Oregon.

The pole stands 156 feet to the top of the sentry, which is the golden ball at the top of the pole. Flag legend says the sentry of a flagpole should contain three items: a knife to cut the flag down in rescue from foreign invaders, a bullet to defend the flag if necessary, and a match to burn the flag rather than surrender it to an enemy.

The flag at the top of Kirkman’s pole is generally 40’ x 60’ most of the year. During the windy season, a slightly smaller version flies for safety reasons.

The pole and flag went up with great ceremony Nov. 12, 2016, in honor of Veterans Day weekend. The message on the plaque at its base reads: “Forever Honor. Never Forget.”

“It was the finest day I can remember,” said Kirkman.

In spite of the goodwill Kirkman intended with the construction of the pole, within days of flying the first flag, somebody tried to steal it, he said.

“We offered a reward, but we never caught the guy,” Kirkman said.

Weighing in at around 75 pounds, each 60’ x 40’ flag costs Kirkman $3,500. Within 90 days of being on the pole, the ends of the flag begin to fray.

Kirkman said his wife and daughter help make repairs to help extend the lives of the flags.

Kirkman also received help with the original project to erect the flagpole from generous donors in the community.

“It got to be pretty humbling doing it,” he said.

Businesses and property owners nearby have also helped, said Kirkman.

“They’ve been really great neighbors,” Kirkman said.

Most people don’t expect the street sweeping guy and ice cream store owner to be the guy behind Oregon’s largest flying American flag, but for Kirkman it’s about working in the community while serving the community.

“It’s been neat to be able to evolve into the fabric of the town,” Kirkman said.