Summary of Recommendation of the Ashland Water Advisory Committee

Who is the Ashland Water Advisory Committee?

In 2010, the City Council appointed eleven Ashland citizens to work with City staff and consultants to update the City's Water Master Plan. Their role is to help identify and prioritize community issues, goals and concerns related to the water conservation, water recycling, public health protection, water supply and reliability, and water quality.

What is the AWAC recommending to the City Council?

The committee believes implementation of the projects listed below ensures a redundant water treatment and distribution system; enhances public safety by providing water for emergency firefighting and potable water during an emergency; and ensures the existing water infrastructure is up to date and well maintained. The AWAC also stresses that water conservation efforts by the Ashland community should increase by 5%.

- Build a second water treatment plant to meet the community needs for water during summer months and emergencies. The second plant will be capable of treating up to 2.5 million gallons of water per day. Cost: $12 million
- Build a water storage tank for water access for firefighting purposes. Cost: $8.7 million
- Enclose the water flowing in the Talent Irrigation Ditch (TID) with pipes to prevent water evaporation and contaminated water flowing into Ashland Creek. Cost: $1.1 million
- Build the Talent/Ashland/Phoenix (TAP) line for access to potable water during emergencies. Cost: $2.1 million
- Replace aging water pipes. Cost: $6.6 million

Why are these projects important?

<u>Second Treatment Plant</u>

The current water treatment plant is located in the narrowest part of the Ashland Creek canyon just below Reeder Reservoir. The area is vulnerable to flooding, wildfire and landslides. When the plant is compromised due to these types of events, it cannot treat raw water and create potable water for distribution to the community. Additionally, during hot summer months, people use a lot more water. By 2018, the current treatment plant will not be able to treat water fast enough to meet the community's summer water consumption.

A second treatment plant, built in a less vulnerable location ensures the City has a redundant water treatment system during emergencies and during peak summer demand.

<u>Water Storage Tank</u>

There are currently five water storage tanks in Ashland. Treated water is pumped to these reservoirs and then pumped through the water system to homes and businesses. When water levels are low in the water storage tanks the water pressure at some fire hydrants throughout town do not have the needed pressure for fire hoses.

Building a tank for water storage is a public safety need for firefighting purposes and ensures water and water pressure is available to fight fire should the need arise.

Enclose TID

Water from Hyatt and Howard Prairie Lakes (not Emigrant Lake) flows through Ashland in the Talent Irrigation Ditch (TID) and eventually flows into Ashland Creek and Wrights Creek. In a dry year, TID water is Ashland's secondary water supply during the summer however much of the water is lost to evaporation. During times of drought, the City pulls water from the TID, pumps it to the treatment plant and then pipes it to the water tanks for distribution to the community. Laying pipes for the water to flow through, rather than in the current open pipes, does two things: it eliminates water loss due to evaporation, thereby ensuring more water for the City to use if needed and it protects the water from becoming contaminated and flowing into Ashland Creek. (E-coli is routinely found in Ashland Creek during the summer and the source has been traced to water from TID).

Emergency TAP

Building the TAP line from Talent to Ashland ensures the City has access to a potable water supply during an emergency. The water flowing through TAP has been treated at the Medford water treatment plant. Should Ashland need treated water in an emergency, TAP will be connected to Ashland's water distribution system. The water will be pumped to the Granite Street water tank for storage and then distributed to the Ashland community.

Replace aging water pipes

Replacement of old pipes and maintenance of existing infrastructure is an ongoing cost. Aging infrastructure will get worse if ignored and eventually replacement costs will be more expensive.

Increase water conservation by 5%

Ashland has made tremendous strides in reducing its water use through water conservation efforts. Reducing our water use by an additional 5% ensures we will have enough raw water through 2038. Adding a half time water conservation position will assist citizens with increased conservation efforts.

Where will these projects be built?

Both the second water treatment plant and the new water storage tank will be located on the hillside along Ashland Creek (above the swimming reservoir on Glen Drive), closer to town and high above Ashland Creek flood line.

TID will be piped from Starlight Place to the Terrace Street Pump Staion.

The emergency TAP line will extend from Creel Road in Talent to a site near the railroad trestle on North Main. From that location it can be pumped to the Granite Street water tank for storage and distribution.

How will we pay for these improvements?

The total cost of the recommended improvements is $30.5 million and will be paid through water rates and system development charges (SDCs). Construction will be financed through revenue bonds.

AWAC is recommending the City raise rates this year, in advance of building the first project, to develop a cash reserve and reduce the need for large rate increases or spikes particularly at the peak of construction in 2017 and 2018. This will create a cash reserve to repay the debt. AWAC feels that raising the rates gradually is less of a hardship than raising the rates all at once.

What is the next step?

Like all City commissions and committees, the AWAC is an advisory group to the City Council who makes the final decision. The Council will review and discuss the AWAC recommendation during a study session scheduled for Monday, April 2. At their meeting on April 17 Council they will then deliberate on the recommendation, and possibly make a final decision. The Council may or may not approve the recommendation and/or the Council may make modifications to the recommendation.

If the Council determines that water rates need to increase, a public hearing will be scheduled to occur during May. A public hearing is a formal process for the Council to set rates and fees. If an increase is approved, it will likely go into effect in June of this year.

City Council meetings are always open to the public and citizens are welcome to voice their opinions to the Council during the meetings or anytime via email to council@ashland.or.us

Who can I contact for more information?

Mike Faught, Director of Public Works for the City of Ashland is the lead staff person on this project. Mike can be contacted via email at faughtm@ashland.or.us or by phone at 541-552-2411.