**Letter to the Brooklyn Village Residents from the outgoing Village President - Pat Hawkey:**

Congratulations to the new Village President Clayton Schulz, to Brit Springer, the new trustee, and to Todd Klahn and Heather Kirkpatrick on their re-election to the Village Board. I am confident that these representatives will make great contributions to the Village of Brooklyn.

Thank you to Kyle Smith who has served as a Trustee on the Village Board for the past two years. His knowledge, concern and commitment to the Village of Brooklyn is appreciated.

During the past year several items have appeared in the newspaper, Facebook and in discussions among the general public that are incorrect, especially concerning the Fire/EMS contract, and I decided as the Village President not to make public comments until the contract negotiations and issues were resolved. The contract has just been settled and is not completed until it is approved and signed by the 5 Municipal boards, with a projected date of completion at the end of April 2017.

In this era of “alternative” or “fake” facts I would like to present “real” facts about the Village of Brooklyn Board decisions, what has been accomplished during my term as Village President and answer questions regarding the Fire/EMS contract.

**BUSINESS COMPLEX:**

1. The current Village Board negotiated a new Community Development Block Grant/Loan requirement for the Business Complex changing the original requirement of companies that wanted to buy/build in the park from 28 jobs to 8 jobs for employees in the low to moderate income level.
2. The current available property in the Business Complex has been sold except for the last lot pending negotiations. Companies are currently building and this will continue until the park is completed.

**SENIOR CENTER:**

1. Transition from a senior center contract to a donation basis to continue the support and availability of the Oregon Senior Center for Village Senior Citizens and enabling the Village Board budgeting flexibility. Current donation for 2017 was approx. $15,000.00. At no time were services at the Oregon Senior Center unavailable to Village of Brooklyn residents.

**LABOR DAY CELEBRATION:**

1. For the past several years the Labor Day festival held in the Village of Brooklyn has been operated by the Sno-Hornet snowmobile club which may or may not include members of the Fire/EMS. The Sno-Hornet’s organization has been an outstanding representation of a group of individuals who have taken on a festival that was dropped by an organization. They have had to meet numerous new requirements imposed by the Village and have successfully grown this celebration each year. From the proceeds of this event they have given donations to civic groups and a donation to the Village to help upgrade electricity in the Village Park.

**FIRE/EMS CONTRACT/REFINANCE:**

1. The Village Board refinanced the loan taken out by the Fire/EMS Commission for the Fire/EMS building, saving the Village of Brooklyn in excess of $30,000.00.
2. The original Fire/EMS contract created in 1995/updated in 2005 no longer represented the correct borrowing structure or payment amount due for services rendered by EMS along with other misc. items, and the contract needed to be updated and brought current with the needs of the municipalities and the Fire/EMS District.

There were several articles regarding the Village of Brooklyn “nonpayment” to the EMS and that the Village was unwilling to negotiate and that the Fire/EMS Service was “running out of money.” The Village of Brooklyn at all times paid the amount due for services under the 2005 contract and they were never in arrears, as was stated several times. The Fire/EMS were never at a funding deficit and the Fire/EMS District had a CD in excess of $83,000.00 from the refinancing of the building available for expenditures. The organization has fund balances from previous budget years and a 2016 budget carryover of approximately $70,000.00 for Fire and $80,000.00 for EMS. These are unrestricted fund balances that do not have any specific purpose identified for their use which allows for the expenditures of these funds for any purpose.

The Village of Brooklyn did not agree with the contract that the Fire/EMS Commission passed and presented to the Municipalities regarding changes to the Fire/EMS contract that created a situation where 4 of the 5 municipalities could makes changes to the contract and borrow money without the agreement of all 5 municipalities. This contract was ratified by 4 of the municipalities making it the new contract under the changed provision that contract changes did not need 5 out of 5 municipalities. The Village of Brooklyn asked for a contract negotiation multiple times with the 5 municipalities prior to the contract from the Fire/EMS Commission being changed and ratified by 4 out of the 5 municipalities. The Town of Oregon had volunteered to sponsor this meeting, but the 4 municipalities ratified the contract presented by the Fire/EMS Commission forcing the Village of Brooklyn to take action to notify the Fire/EMS District of their intent to leave the Fire/EMS District by December 2017 if a contract resolution could not be initiated.

Contract negotiations are often messy and not transparent to those residents who do not have all the facts. The Town of Oregon sponsored two meetings between the 5 municipal boards – Town of Oregon, Town of Rutland, Town of Union, Town of Brooklyn and the Village of Brooklyn -- because the municipal boards recognized the need to reevaluate the version of the contract created by the Fire/EMS Commission. In my opinion, great leadership was shown by all the participants when the 5 municipal boards agreed to meet and create a new Fire/EMS contract. These joint meetings were possibly the best demonstration of how government should work that I have ever seen, and it created a new Fire/EMS contract which includes provisions for an audit, guaranteeing involvement by 5 out of 5 municipalities in the budget process, contract resolution language and guarantees from the municipalities to work together to develop a formula for the calculation of payments to support the Fire/EMS District.

The residents need to be assured that at no time, no matter how many people stated it, they were at risk of not being protected by Fire/EMS Services. Unfortunately, because of misinformation many Fire/EMS staff members and their families were made to feel that their efforts and sacrifices were NOT appreciated by members of the Village of Brooklyn Board. Nothing could be further from the truth – members of the Village Board have served or are still serving in capacities within Fire/EMS. There has never been one person on this Village Board who has not supported and appreciated all the efforts and sacrifices by the Fire/EMS staff.

I have been accused, as the representative from the Village of Brooklyn on the Fire/EMS Commission, as having a vendetta against Fire/EMS – that too could not be further from the truth. As a member of the Village Board and the President, asking questions and seeking information from the Fire/EMS District is vital for decision-making regarding budgets and service protection of the citizens. Being alerted to the lack of volunteers statewide as well as locally to staff the Fire/EMS services makes analysis of these services and staffing an important issue for this Village Board, for public safety today and in the future.

I hope that all the residents become engaged in the process of government. I am happy to pass the responsibility of being the President to Clayton Schulz and I wish him and the current Village Board the very best with the tough decisions in the future. Thank you to all the citizens I have met over the past two years, especially those who contacted me to discuss issues and work toward solutions.

**A lot has been accomplished by this Village Board:**

1. Resolving the CDBG loan issue requiring 28 jobs from a company wanting to build in the Business Complex and negotiating a change to 8 jobs allowing for this Village Board to sell all of the property to companies that are currently building and will continue to be building in the Business Complex for the next few years.
2. Purchase of the acreage adjacent to the Sewer Plant for future expansion
3. The Board recently approved the continuation of a housing development on the north entrance to the Village which will provide duplex buildings, making the entrance into the Village more appealing than apartment buildings.
4. Discontinue the Municipal Court within the Village and move the operation to the county level, alleviating the need to fill municipal court positions and operating costs.
5. Improve email system to make it available on mobile devices and archiving emails for continual access of historical data.
6. Updated the webpage to include adding more historical agendas and minutes and incorporating Fire/EMS agendas and minutes for easier access by residents.
7. Property swap to Oregon School District to ensure Brooklyn Elementary remodeling bio-retention for storm water control was adequate.
8. Joint effort with Town of Brooklyn and the Veteran’s Memorial Committee to complete the Veteran’s Memorial.
9. Transition from a senior center contract to a donation basis to continue the support and availability of the Oregon Senior Center for Village Senior Citizens.
10. Multiple planning/zoning requests for rezoning and commercial building approvals.
11. Continued and approved more staffing for the Summer Recreation program to meet the growing needs of the program.
12. Approve and work with the Village Clerk’s Office to ensure recodification of the ordinance and availability online.
13. Work with Community groups to ensure the safe and successful availability of events for Memorial Day by the Community Antique Tractor Pullers and the Labor Day celebration by the Sno-Hornets.
14. Approval of replacement furnaces and roof improvements to the Community building to ensure the usage of the building for years to come for Village residents.
15. Eliminate multiple individual committees to streamline and improve the speed of decision-making by having two Village Board Meetings per month instead of only one meeting.
16. Refinancing of building loan for Fire/EMS District, approval of loan for Fire Tender and 14 plus months of contract negotiations.
17. Multiple meetings/decisions to meet the state requirements for phosphorus removal at the sewer plant with critical evaluations to meet the requirements in a fiscally responsible manner to limit the impact on the water/sewer billing for customers.
18. Managing the Village Budget and being sensitive to any increase in taxes to a community already crippled by high water and sewer bills.

These are just a few of the many accomplishments that have been completed by this Village Board, and I as a citizen wish to thank the Village Board for all the hours they have given to this Village.

Pat Hawkey