Before cutting, read about tree preservation regulations

Black Diamond enjoys significant natural beauty. Much of that beauty is due to the many trees that remain throughout our City. Large evergreen tree stands, small deciduous groves and even mature individual trees are an integral part of the rural or “green” character that Black Diamond citizens value and have worked hard to preserve.

Trees are more than just great scenery, though. Because of their aesthetic value, trees have been found to raise property values. Trees also stabilize soil, control water pollution, conserve energy, reduce stormwater runoff, improve air quality and provide habitat to wildlife.

In recognition of the importance of our trees, on July 17, 2008 the City Council adopted new regulations for tree preservation. The regulations will reduce the number of trees lost during construction, discourage the indiscriminate removal of trees, and require the planting of replacement trees for those that may be lost to development.

The regulations only apply to “significant trees” (greater than 6 inches in diameter as measured 4.5 feet above the ground) and do not apply to any trees located within 10 feet of the perimeter of a single-family house and its driveway. The regulations also allow a property owner to remove six trees within a three-year period and exempt certain trees.

There is a lot more to the new regulations than can be discussed in this article. Please contact the Community Development Department before removing trees to understand better how the tree preservation regulations may affect your project.

New permit system launched

On December 8, the Community Development Department went “live” with its new permit tracking software, Permit Trax. The new software will allow the department to more easily process and track all types of building permits, land use applications, and business licenses. Staff has input existing business licenses into the system and used it to generate the annual renewal notices that were sent out in late December. We look forward to serving our customers better with this new tool!
Green River Bridge repair work ahead of schedule

Work to repair the 80-year-old State Route 169 Green River bridge is proceeding ahead of schedule. Tri-State Construction crews finished excavating 20,000 truck loads of material from an area just south of the bridge six days early. Workers are now planning for phase two.

The Green River Bridge (also known as the Kummer Bridge), which connects Black Diamond and Enumclaw, has been closed since November 18 when bridge engineers noticed small but significant movement in the south pier and in the soil that supports the bridge. Engineers determined the bridge was too dangerous to allow traffic to cross.

Early attempts
The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) tried low-cost, low-impact work to improve bridge safety. Only recently, with the onslaught of heavy rain in early November, did the landslide cross the tipping point and force extraordinarily dangerous movement in the soil.

Fixing the problem
Geotechnical engineers are working to stabilize a large ancient landslide that has been pushing the bridge slowly to the southwest for years.

The first goal was to alleviate the pressure this landslide exerted on the bridge pier. To do that, crews excavated a large piece of land 20 feet deep by 80 feet wide by 200 feet long. Removing the wet soil solved the first part of the problem. At a later date, crews will return and fill the area with lightweight material to relieve pressure on the bridge.

The next phase is significantly more complicated. Crews will drill a series of 55 shafts deep into the bedrock. Some shafts will extend 90 feet. Others will extend 45 feet. They will fill these shafts with varying strengths of concrete. These shafts will then tie together to create a retaining wall measuring 160 feet long. It is this wall that will protect the pier. The repair work has received emergency federal funding. This project will cost $15 million.

Next steps
A wall of this size in an area with wet, shifting soil requires detailed, highly accurate design plans. While bridge engineers have a plan, it will take another few weeks to finalize the details of the work. During this time, local residents will not see any workers on site. The work continues, but not in the field. Crews will be on site in February and will work around the clock to build this retaining wall.

Detours, Pictures & Information
The Kummer Bridge is vital to the communities of Black Diamond and Enumclaw. It carries an estimated 9,000 trips each day including emergency services and law enforcement. There are two detour routes, one for passenger vehicles and one for commercial trucks. Drivers can download the maps at: www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/SR169/GreenRiverRepair/Detour.htm. Project progress at: www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/sr169/greenriverrepair/. Pictures at: www.flickr.com/photos/wsdot/sets/72157610963340028/

Open house
The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) is planning to host an open house in our area to further explain the next steps sometime in January or early February. The WSDOT engineers are currently working on the design for the permanent fix for the bridge and are expecting to relay what will be needed to stabilize the south bridge pier at that meeting. The City of Black Diamond will assist with getting the word out for this open house via the City website: www.ci.blackdiamond.wa.us.

Railroad Avenue street improvement progresses
The City started the design for the reconstruction of the Railroad Avenue Street Improvement project in the Old Town Business Center in the spring of 2008. In the summer of 2008 it was determined that a new solution was needed to deal with stormwater treatment and detention. As the stormwater design issues are being resolved, the City will meet with abutting property owners again in January to go over the design of the street and how the project might impact them. It is expected that the project will be under construction this coming Spring and Summer and be complete before Labor Day.

Seth Boettcher is the project manager and can be contacted at (360) 886-2560 ext. 211.
2009 budget “holds the line”

The City Council adopted a conservative 2009 Budget for Black Diamond at their December 23 meeting. The 2009 Budget outlines the cost of the City’s police, fire, planning, utilities and all operating costs. Council continued their commitment to public safety with an 81% allocation of the net General Fund expenditures to fund safety related operations. “Hold-the-line” was the budget rule for 2009, with no new positions, scaled back operating costs and conservative revenue estimates, which included a citywide property tax increase of only $9,514.

The budget did include the 2009 portion of the 2008-2013 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). This adopted plan was a first for Black Diamond and will help the City secure grants as well as providing capital direction for the future. Some of the 2009 capital items funded in the budget included police cars, a police records computer system, amenities at the Skate Park, Union Stump and Eagle Creek, improvements to the Lake Sawyer Boat Launch, street improvements for Railroad Avenue, and capital maintenance of the City Shops, Council Chambers and Courtroom.

The 2009 Budget also includes revenue and expenditures for the City’s Water and Sewer Utilities, and added a new Stormwater Utility Fund to assist in the management of stormwater flows and compliance with state and federal water quality regulations. A $13 residential equivalent monthly rate was included as revenue to fund the stormwater fund costs.

A 15 percent water rate increase is included in the water operating budget revenue. This is the first water rate increase since 1998 and was needed to begin to cover the water fund operating costs. A King County Metro rate increase of $2.95 per month and the pass through Soos Creek rate increase of .14¢ per month were included in the sewer fund operating revenues. You can view the 2009 Budget on the city’s website or a copy is available to view or purchase at City Hall. A summary of utility rates that will be in effect with the first month’s 2009 billing (mailed at the end of January) is posted on the City’s website at www.ci.blackdiamond.wa.us.

City still early in talks with Nestlé

The Black Diamond City council approved an access agreement with Nestlé Waters North America on November 6. The Agreement for Property Access, Use and Occupancy only grants Nestlé limited rights to conduct testing at the municipally owned springs under City oversight. It is capped at to 365 days unless terminated earlier by the City or further extended by the City Council. It does not obligate the City of Black Diamond any further or in any way transfer water rights.

Since Council approval of that agreement, consultants under contract with Nestlé have been on the springs site to conduct water sampling, hydraulic testing and wetlands analyses.

In early December, the Economic Development Committee Councilmembers — Bill Boston and Leih Mulvihill — along with Mayor Botts and Economic Development Director Andrew Williamson, visited a Nestlé water bottling plant in Hope, British Columbia. The purpose was to see a bottling facility in action and experience firsthand the noise levels and traffic volumes related to the bottling plant. The mayor and Councilmembers also met with local government officials and talked to local residents and business owners to gauge the community reactions to the plant in Hope, B.C.

Mayor Botts and Councilmembers have requested that Nestlé host a town hall meeting for citizens early in 2009. Should you have further questions, please call or email Andrew Williamson, Economic Development Director, at awilliamson@ci.blackdiamond.wa.us or (360) 886-2560 ext. 215.
Safety tips for heating your home during winter

Winter time is upon us and with that comes finding ways to keep warm. The fire department respond to many residential fires due to people heating their homes incorrectly. Below are a few safety tips.

**Wood Stoves**

Wood stoves cause over 4,000 residential fires every year. Carefully follow the manufacturer’s installation and maintenance instructions. Look for solid construction, such as plate steel or cast iron metal. Check for cracks and inspect legs, hinges and door seals for smooth joints and seams. Use only seasoned wood for fuel, not green wood, artificial logs, or trash. Inspect and clean your pipes and chimneys annually and check monthly for damage or obstructions. Be sure to keep combustible objects at least three feet away from your wood stove.

**Electric Space Heaters**

Buy only heaters evaluated by a nationally recognized laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL). Check to make sure it has a thermostat control mechanism and will switch off automatically if the heater falls over. Heaters are not dryers or tables. Don't dry clothes or store objects on top of your heater. Space heaters need space. Keep combustibles at least three feet away from each heater. Always unplug your electric space heater when not in use.

**Kerosene Heaters**

Buy only heaters evaluated by a nationally recognized laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL). Never fill your heater with gasoline or camp stove fuel as both flare up easily. Only use crystal clear K-1 kerosene. Never overfill any portable heater. Use the kerosene heater in a well-ventilated room.

**Fireplaces**

Fireplaces regularly build up creosote in their chimneys. They need to be cleaned out frequently and chimneys should be inspected for obstructions and cracks to prevent deadly chimney and roof fires. Check to make sure the damper is open before starting any fire. Never burn trash, paper or green wood in your fireplace. These materials cause heavy creosote buildup and are difficult to control. Use a screen heavy enough to stop rolling logs and big enough to cover the entire opening of the fireplace to catch flying sparks. Don't wear loose-fitting clothes near any open flame. Make sure the fire is completely out before leaving the house or going to bed. Store cooled ashes in a tightly sealed metal container outside the home.

Finally, having a working smoke alarm dramatically increases your chances of surviving a fire. And remember to practice a home escape plan frequently with your family.

Get involved with your community: attend public hearings

**Council Public Hearings**

January 15 ~ Transportation Plan (Chapter 7 of Comprehensive Plan)

**Planning Commission Public Hearings**

January 6 ~ Proposed Design Guidelines

Watch the City’s website for the latest information.

City Council extends moratorium

At its December 23 meeting, the City Council extended the existing moratorium on accepting applications for Master Planned Developments (MPDs) and subdivisions for another six months, through June 30, 2009. However, it is likely the moratorium will be lifted before that time, as City staff and the Council have been working hard to update plans, codes and regulations that need to be completed before major new residential development occurs within the city. The moratorium extension does allow for early processing of MPD applications, provided a developer agrees to comply with any subsequent changes to policies, codes and regulations. This will allow YarrowBay to begin the submittal process for their two projects, The Villages and Lawson Hills.

Please note that the moratorium does NOT apply to individual single-family homes and multi-family construction, or commercial or industrial projects. The City continues to accept applications for those types of projects. Contact the Community Development Department should you need further information. The number is (360) 886-2560.
Recently adopted ordinances

At the December 4 and December 23 Council meetings, the Council adopted the following ordinances:

♦ Ordinance No. 08-879 — Amending Section 13.04.280 Relating to Water Service Rates
♦ Ordinance No. 08-880 — Establishing Administrative Regulations
♦ Ordinance No. 08-881 — Establishing Duties and Powers of City Administrator
♦ Ordinance No. 08-882 — Allowing Commercial Signs in Right of Way During Streets or Highway Closures
♦ Ordinance No. 08-883 — Establishing Stormwater Utility Tax
♦ Ordinance No. 08-884 — Adopting Comprehensive Park Plan
♦ Ordinance No. 08-885 — Continuing Moratorium on Master Planned Developments
♦ Ordinance No. 08-886 — Authorizing Interfund Loan for Police Records
♦ Ordinance No. 08-887 — Authorizing 2008 Year End Budget Change
♦ Ordinance No. 08-888 — Adopting 2009 Budget
♦ Ordinance No. 08-889 — Repealing Water Surcharge
♦ Ordinance No. 08-890 — Revising Water Connection Fees

Copies of ordinances and resolutions are available for review at City Hall, 24301 Roberts Drive, or by contacting Brenda L. Streepy, City Clerk, at (360) 886-2560 ext. 209.

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE @ WWW.CI.BLACKDIAMOND.WA.US