Bulman: Time to look ahead to 2012

Karen Bulman, newly-elected president of the Rapid City Common Council, said it's fine for city residents to reflect on the twenty years of progress the city has made since the 1972 flood, but she also wants them to participate in planning for the next twenty years of city progress.

Bulman explained the Vision 2012 Project to a recent Democratic Forum. "We're to the point now where we need to decide what we're going to do with the next 20 years."

Vision 2012 seeks to involve citizens in the city's planning process. "We've had three neighborhood meetings so far with one upcoming in June. This gives the people a grassroots chance to talk about what direction the city should take," said Bulman. The meetings have drawn an average of 40 to 45 people.

The purpose of Vision 2012 is to identify and analyze projects that people favor. "There's a lot of ideas for projects and most of them are good," said Bulman, "but we need to prioritize. We can't do them all." About 30 projects have been identified so far. But the tough part lies ahead, said Bulman. "We need to develop criteria to determine the need for a project, and what information we need to justify it. And we need to know, not only what projects, but what process will be used to get it accomplished."

Bulman said that "we need to address the planning and funding issues now, even though the project may be a long way down the road." The city's half-cent sales tax is scheduled to expire sometime in 1995. "If we want to do any of the projects, we won't have the funds available without that tax."

Bulman said it would be up to the people to vote to extend the tax, which can only be used for capital improvements. Presently the tax is used to fund the lease-payback on the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center.

The top projects identified so far are the Spirit of the Hills Museum, a recycling plant, an indoor recreation center with skating facilities and swimming pool, new school buildings, a visitor center, Canyon Lake restoration, economic development, and street improvements. The next Vision 2012 meeting will be scheduled for sometime in late June.