

Senior Center Facility Taking Shape

During its May 17 meeting, The Vernonia Planning Commission approved a conditional use application that included a site for the proposed Vernonia Senior Center adjacent to Vernonia Lake. Other conditional uses approved at that meeting were the Bicycle Skills Park, the Skateboard Park, a Mill Site Interpretive Center, an event center and a location for a future RV park. Except for the Skills Park, the Planning Commission still must approve the detailed project plan for each of these uses.

According to Jim Tierney, project manager for the Senior Center project, the Vernonia Senior Center comes to the Lake after nearly 10 years of looking for a suitable site. The seniors in partnership with the city have examined sites on both sides of Rose Avenue near the south entrance to town. They considered the old Joy Theater Building and two other buildings on Adams Street. They even looked for sites where they could purchase and demolish several adjacent houses to create a big enough site. In the end, they concluded the lake site to be the best choice.

The choice of the Lake site itself was a source of further delay for the project. As happened with the development of the Rainier Senior Center, the city and adjacent landowners needed to plan development of a much larger undeveloped area before the senior center could proceed. For the last year and a half the city, the seniors, the city parks committee and the remaining private land owner have worked to craft a plan agreeable to all. The award of the conditional use by the Vernonia Planning Commission is the formal end of that planning period.

The land use approval on the 17th will allow the Seniors and Community Action Team (CAT), Tierney's employer, to finish preliminary design, negotiate final land sales and raise money for the project.

The current building plan includes more than 7,000 square feet that will house the Senior Center and Vernonia Cares. The Senior Center portion of the building will include a large dining room with a view of the Lake, a commercial kitchen, space for the thrift shop, of-

fices and a clinic room for minor medical care. Vernonia Cares will also occupy space at the center, with a large cooler, food storage and food processing spaces, offices and a distribution space. Christian Eberle, a Portland architect, has been retained to do the preliminary design. Final design must be done by an architect retained by the city after all funding has been secured.

The primary funding source planned for the project is an \$800,000 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) to the city from the State of Oregon. Tierney explained that this is the same source that provided the primary funding for the Vernonia Head Start Center and the Vernonia Community Learning Center. CDBG grants are only available to cities and counties. Other funding for the estimated \$1.2 million dollar project will come from donations, including foundations. According to Tierney, CAT has successfully assisted cities and counties to complete over thirty CDBG projects worth more than \$15 million.

Pioneer Museum

On May 20, Mark Greathouse, a descendant of the Malmsten family, gave a well-researched talk on the history of the Malmsten family at the Vernonia pioneer Museum. Mr. Greathouse's family history covered the Malmstens' journey from Sweden through the Midwest to Vernonia in its early years. Mark donated copies of several family documents and pictures to add to the other items he had already graciously donated to the museum from his family.

The museum captured this presentation on DVD, as they do with all museum talks, to preserve these oral histories. If you missed a talk that was of particular interest, you can stop by the museum and watch the video.

The Museum Talk scheduled for June 24 has been canceled due to illness of the speaker. The museum will resume their monthly talks in the Fall.

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The Vernonia Pioneer Museum summer schedule is now in effect. The museum will be open Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from 1 - 4 pm June through mid-September. As always, they are looking for additional volunteers, especially during the extended summer season. Give them a call at 503-429-3713 if you can help.



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