

# CityNews...

## City Council March 3, 2008

### Columbia County Sheriff Candidate Jeff Dickerson Addresses Community...

Jeff Dickerson, who is running for Columbia County Sheriff, was in Vernonia to speak to local citizens about his candidacy. He addressed the City Council and those in attendance and spoke his view for the need to maximize patrols and improve service, including the possibility of assigning deputies to certain geographical areas of responsibility. Dickerson also noted the progress that the Vernonia Police Department has made under the leadership of Chief Mathew Workman, describing it as "an outstanding department."

### Liquor Licenses Renewed...

Liquor Licenses were renewed for the following businesses: Lyons Den Pub and Eatery, Buckhorn Restaurant and Pub, Vernonia Sentry Market, Bridge Street Mini Mart.

### Public Works Committee Appointment Made...

Mayor Sally Harrison appointed Vernonia resident Dale Webb to the Public Works Committee. Webb, who previously expressed interest in being appointed, noted that he has been a resident of Vernonia for fifty years and might bring insights to the committee that some people might not be aware of.

### Parks Committee Presents Projects...

Scott Laird, chair of the Vernonia Parks Committee, presented potential projects that the

committee would like to recommend this spring including: construction of informational kiosks at Anderson and Airport Parks; updating and standardizing the information in all park kiosks; reseeding and field maintenance at Spencer Sports Fields; and stocking of Vernonia Lake to encourage more use for fishing this season.

### Council Considers Sale of Old City Hall Building...

City Council directed Interim City Administrator Aldie Howard to move forward with an appraisal of the old City Hall building on Bridge Street. The building is having problems with a leaking roof, and Howard has asked the Council to consider if they are interested in trying to find a buyer for the property.

### Police Department Replaces Damaged Vehicle...

Vernonia Police Chief Mathew Workman reported that the Police Department has replaced the 2001 Tahoe that was damaged during the flood with a 2004 Expedition which is being fitted with equipment so it can be used as a canine unit. Insurance money was used and will cover all expenses.

## City Council March 17, 2008

### Council Discusses City Administrator Search Criteria...

Council met with Jennie Messmer from Oregon League of Cities prior to the regular meet-

ing to discuss creation of a job description to be used during the upcoming recruitment search for a new City Administrator. Council discussed general background skills, qualities, and technical experience that would be desirable in possible candidates, along with potential salary expectations. Council has not agreed to a timetable for beginning the search.

### More Liquor Licenses Approved...

Council approved renewed Liquor Licenses for the Cedar Side Inn and Black Bear Coffee Company.

### City Requests Flood Control Study...

Council passed a resolution requesting assistance from the Army Corp of Engineers to conduct studies and investigate the feasibility of developing a flood control project. The Army Corp will pay for the first \$100,000 costs for the study with the city paying half of any additional costs. If a project were found feasible and implemented, the city would be responsible for paying thirty-five percent of costs which could include credits for providing land, easements and right-of-way.

### City Receives Donation of Grass Seed...

The City Parks Department has received a donation of 1,000 pounds of grass seed from Burlingham Seeds which will be used to reseed the Spencer Field Sports Complex.

## From Our Elected Officials - Oregon Legislative Report

By Senator Betsy Johnson

The final gavel of Oregon's historic "Supplemental Session" fell just before 10:00 PM on February 22nd – seven days prior to the scheduled adjournment date.

In my opinion, we produced several substantive accomplishments. I also believe we demonstrated the value of annual sessions.



### Accomplishments

- We strengthened senior programs by investing in assisted living facilities, adult foster care and Oregon Project Independence – a program designed to keep seniors in their own homes for as long as possible.
- Recognizing that childcare workers are carrying huge caseloads, we expanded child protective services in order to protect vulnerable children.
- We added thirty-nine more State Troopers. Combined with the 100 troopers from the 2007 session, the Legislature has ensured that we have twenty-four hour, seven day per week coverage throughout Oregon.
- Funded a unique water storage program in the Umatilla Basin to help rural farmers find sustainable solutions for water supply problems.
- Improved fairness for Oregon homeowners by cracking down on "rescue" mortgage scams that target families facing foreclosure. We required "plain language" information to help distressed homeowners avoid unnecessary foreclosures, and we reigned in unlicensed loan originators who have operated with minimal state oversight.
- Provided funding for our courts to begin electronic record keeping throughout the state.
- Invested in enhanced communications for "first responders" and other state agencies with critical communication infrastructure.
- Provided capital construction assistance to community colleges – including four million in bonding authority for Clatsop Community College.
- Responded to the December 2007 storms with a suite of bills designed to speed-up infrastructure recovery, provide faster unemployment insurance benefits to affected persons and make it more difficult for insurance companies to raise rates or cancel policies in the wake of a natural disaster. Vernonia will directly benefit from the revolving loan fund established to speed reconstruction.
- Continued planning money to the Department of Human Services for the Oregon State Hospital.
- Passed SB-1073 (my own bill) to deal with the lack of affordable housing in Oregon. The unique model in SB-1073 uses two million state dollars to leverage nearly 48 million in private and philanthropic money to keep between 7,000 and 9,000 units of affordable housing in the available portfolio.

- Offered – in a truly bipartisan effort – an alternative to the exorbitantly expensive citizen initiative on the fall ballot mandating prison terms for first-time property crime offenders. Legislators, in February, referred to the voters a measure to fight property crime by stiffening penalties for repeat offenders and requiring substance abuse treatment.

### What's "Un-Done"

Could the Legislature have done more? Certainly, but the intentionally short duration of this supplemental session made tackling hugely complex issues like liability limits and tort reform not feasible. Instead, a task force will recommend changes to Oregon's Tort Claims Act and its \$200,000 cap on damages paid by governmental agencies for the longer 2009 Legislature. This issue will need ample time to debate.

Another serious and complex issue for the 2009 session will be a response to the State's lax treatment of teachers involved in sexual misconduct. The Legislature increased the investigative power of the Teachers Standards and Practices Commission, but the issue is far from resolved.

### Annual Sessions

I came to the idea of annual sessions slowly. There was something very appealing about citizen lawmakers leaving everyday jobs in order to come to Salem and do "The Peoples' Business". When the Oregon Legislature first met in Salem in 1860, they finished their business in 40 days and went home.

For the next 75 years, they came every other year and never stayed longer than two months. Since 1971, only seven sessions have ended before July, and twenty-one of the thirty-six special sessions in state history have taken place in that time-span.

I have served in the two longest sessions in Oregon history – one lasting nearly nine months.

The world is more complex – too complex – for the legislature to meet every other year.

As the third, co-equal branch of government, the Legislature needs to convene more frequently in order to responsibly provide budget and agency oversight. Failure to do so concentrates knowledge, and, therefore power, in the hands of a few and certainly renders the Legislature subordinate to the Executive and Judicial Branches.

All ninety Oregon Legislators were in Salem when we received the February financial forecast showing our revenues off by nearly \$190 million dollars. All of us were there to act on the problem rather than just the twenty member Emergency Board.

Only the Oregon voters can change the Constitution to create annual sessions. I believe a referral to the citizens of Oregon will come from the 2009 Regular Session. Based on our successful experiment in February of 2008, I think the concept of annual sessions deserves your consideration.