

CityNews...

City Council April 7, 2008

Council Hears Presentations from Columbia County Rider and Columbia County Public Health...

Janet Wright and Henry Heimuller explained services provided by Columbia County Rider and discussed the growth of the program. They reminded local citizens that Columbia County Rider is a public transportation service and is available for all citizens to use, not just senior citizens. Columbia County Rider is now operating from the Community Learning Center Building and hopes to have a centralized dispatch system in place shortly, increasing its ability to provide efficient service. Columbia County Rider is requesting \$3,500 from the City of Vernonia to help subsidize services.

Columbia River Fire and Rescue Chief Jay Tappan, a board member of Columbia County Public Health, and Karen Ladd presented printed information and statistics about public health issues of concern to residents of Columbia County.

Council Approves Lease Agreement with Columbia County Flood Relief...

Council accepted a lease agreement with the Columbia County Flood Relief for use of the Vernonia Community Learning Center Building. Rent would be \$1400 per month and include utilities; rent is retroactive to January 1, 2008. Columbia County Flood Relief will share use of the building with programs run by the Learning Center.

Council Approves Budget Calendar...

Council approved the proposed Budget Calendar for fiscal year 2008-09. The proposed

budget will be presented to council on May 5, followed by scheduled committee meetings on May 13 and 15. Addition meetings may be held on May 20 and 22 if necessary to approve a recommended budget. The final budget hearing is scheduled to take place on June 23 or 30 when the recommended budget will be adopted by council. All meetings are open to the public.

Knott Street Becomes Jurisdiction of Vernonia...

The City of Vernonia accepted jurisdictional responsibility for Knott Street within the Vernonia UGB. Knott Street was previously controlled by Columbia County.

Other Actions...

- Council did not accept a lease agreement between the City and AMAR Properties and George and Donna Tice for part of an alley way.
- Council tabled a request to waive SDC charges of \$10,794 on a home being built for the Dean Schaumburg family. Schaumburg was injured in a logging accident, and the home is being built by volunteers with donations.
- Council denied a proposal from Brix Paving Co. to repaint crosswalks in the downtown area.
- Council signed an agreement with the Bridges Planning Group, deleting a line that requested a \$2,000 contribution from the city for expenses.

City Council April 21, 2008

Council Approves Grant Application...

After a public hearing, Council approved ap-

plying for a \$500,000 Community Development Block Grant that would be used to begin assisting flood victims with home lifts, repairs and rehabilitations. Community Action Team would be the Primary Grant Administrator in partnership with the City of Vernonia.

Council Hears Presentation From Bridges Planning Group...

Council heard an update from the Bridges Planning Group; they identified the remaining steps they will be performing in their community visioning process and outlined the priorities that they have identified for the community.

Council Appoints Budget Officer...

Council appointed Temporary Finance Officer M.R. "Dick" Kline as Budget Officer.

Lewis Resigns from Planning Commission...

Planning Commissioner Heather Lewis submitted a letter of resignation citing circumstances beyond her control. Lewis stated that if these circumstances changed in the future, she would be happy to make herself available again.

Council Approves Declaration of Surplus Property...

Council approved declaring the old City Hall Building on Bridge Street as surplus public property and directed staff to begin the process of finding a buyer.

Other Actions...

Council approved the renewal of the Liquor License for the New Hong Kong Restaurant. Council approved Support for the annual Bear Creek Run/Walk event, a fund raiser for the Vernonia Cares Food Bank.

From Our Elected Officials

By Mayor Sally Harrison

As I drive down Bridge Street, things are looking pretty normal if you allow for the snow in late April. But looks can be deceiving because I know for so many this has been a long and trying winter. I know this because yours truly has been dealing with the same flood related issues as the rest of you. I can only hope that you have had the same kind of wonderful friends as I have to help you along. Don and Nancy Dailey and Pat and Sharron Rockwood have graciously taken me in while my house is being redone. I do see the light at the end of the tunnel and hopefully will be back home in the next couple of weeks. When that happens, it will just be my cocker, Sophie, Perkins, my tuxedo kitty, and me. Unfortunately, I had to move Del, my husband of 47 years, to The Gardens for advanced dementia in Forest Grove right after the flood. We all have our crosses to bear. But, we keep going forward. That's what makes us Vernonians.

It is that same tenacity and drive of our citizens that will fix the problems facing this community. You can count us down, but don't ever count us out!!

The City of Vernonia has financial problems. We can point the finger in many directions and be correct when meting out blame, but the fact is that the flood has pushed us over the edge. The extent of our woes will become more apparent during the budget process coming in May. Everyone is welcome to these meetings so you will know the straight information on where we are and where we're going.

I do believe there are areas under the City's umbrella that should be paying their own way rather than depending on the General Fund to pick up the slack. One is the Airport that has been operating in the red until

the City augmented its account with interdepartmental loans. For that reason, I'm all for the development of the Airport and enhancing its use from beyond a select few so that it not only is self-supporting but becomes an economic asset.

The Park Department is struggling. The Parks committee has made proposals that hopefully will make it a viable financial entity.

The Learning Center has suffered a devastating set back due to having its uses curtailed for flood relief. Even with the fact the City has a \$750,000 building in its inventory, it needs to be self-supporting.

The Public Library is so efficiently managed by Nancy Burch and the Library Board that it never exceeds its budget.

Vernonia Memorial Cemetery, a perpetual care cemetery, hasn't been a problem but bears watching. Its reserves are low, it needs work done to it, and more and more people are opting for cremation. Its main source of income is the sale of burial plots. Just a reminder: we may need to find ways to shore up its funding.

Lately, I took a tour around town to count potholes of all things! I finally quit at 120 and counting, some of which are real axle busters. Hopefully we will receive a \$200,000.00 grant to start fixing some of them this summer. In the meantime, drive carefully.

And last but by no means least is Waste Man-

agement and the new garbage rates and curbside recycling. I know, I know, at first blush it sounds like more money, but if we take advantage of the recycling options offered, it's a good deal. For myself, I'll be able to go to one can a month, recycling twice a month and save twelve dollars every two months. So take a good look at what you can do under the new system and see if you can save, too.

I have gone on and on and only scratched the surface of what needs attention. You drive down Bridge Street and things look pretty normal, but they're not. Take a closer look and you will see everyone busy putting their lives back together, working to make Vernonia a better place to live.

In Vernonia – Did You Know...

- True Value Hardware sells home appliances and paint and if you don't see something you need in the store, they can order it for you.
- The Vernonia Senior Center serves lunch every day for \$3. Breakfast is served Friday mornings at 7:30 am. They also have a thrift store. It is all open to the general public.
- The Vernonia Sentry Market can special order more varieties of wines than what is on the shelf?
- The Vernonia Pioneer Museum will open on request for field trips and special requests? Just call 503-429-3713.

Just a reminder of services offered in Vernonia brought to you by the Vernonia Area Chamber of Commerce 503-429-6081.