

CityNews...

City Council May 5, 2008

CERT Volunteers Recognized...

Vernonia Police Chief Mathew Workman and Sergeant Mike Kay presented nineteen citizens with certificates of completion for the Citizen Emergency Response Team (CERT) training. Each volunteer completed over thirty hours of training to help assist their community in the event of emergency situations, including search and rescue techniques, basic first aid, and fire prevention. Chief Workman and Sergeant Kay thanked the volunteers for their dedication.

City Approves Required Deadly Physical Force Plan...

Vernonia Police Chief Mathew Workman presented the County Deadly Physical Force Plan, a requirement made by the State Legislature in 2007. The plan is intended to guide the investigation into the use of deadly physical force by a member of a law enforcement agency and promote public confidence in the criminal justice system.

Appointment Made to Planning Commission...

Mayor Sally Harrison appointed Sharon Parrow to the Planning Commission.

City Settles Suit...

City Council directed Legal Council to accept an offer to settle pending litigation over cost overruns in the construction of Phase I of the wastewater treatment system.

City Council May 19, 2008

City to Apply for Community Block Grant...

Council moved to apply for a Community Development Block Grant to update the Wastewater Facilities plan.

Council Passes Parks Changes...

City council approved an updated Park Host agreement for Anderson Park and an updated Vendor Agreement for Vernonia Lake. The Council also approved recommended increases to park fees.

Council also agreed to engage Alta Planning and Design to assist in development of the Vernonia Bicycle Skills Park.

Citizen Complains About Off Leash Dogs at Lake...

Mayor Sally Harrison read a letter from Pamela Cohen asking the city to enforce its leash laws at Vernonia Lake. Police Chief Mathew Workman informed council that his department would need to be instructed that this was a priority. There was discussion about ways for better enforcement. Council was told that Park rules are clearly posted.

Request for Closure of Madison Avenue Approved...

The Vernonia Chamber of Commerce and Hands on Art received permission to close Madison Avenue for First Friday's On June 6, July 4, and September 5. The Open Air Market, usually held in the courtyard of the Community Learning Center on Fridays from 4:00-7:00 PM, will be moved to Madison Avenue for First Fridays.

City Council: Greetings To The Citizens Of Vernonia

By Councilman Randy Parrow

I hope everyone has been paying attention to the financial crisis the City is in. This crisis hasn't been caused by any one event or even two events. This is a crisis that has been building up for over 40-50 years (probably even more). I don't have all the facts or answers, however, I have what I think are plausible explanations and directions to go. We are in this situation because of years of neglected infrastructure (Water, Sewer, Streets, Storm Water) and some bad decisions (Learning Center, OA Hill Sidewalk Project, Current Sewer Project), by some of our past Administrators, past and current Councils (Yep, I'm one of them).

We fixed water lines (We were losing up to 50% of the water we produced into the ground), we fixed sewer (only to be told by DEQ it was no longer conforming), we started on a new sewer project (we still have the longest running MAO with DEQ in the State of Oregon), and we try to fix streets and make a perfect town. The water was right, the sewer was right to some degree, and maybe we need to look at streets differently. The Learning Center was over budget, the OA Hill Sidewalk Project was over budget, and the sewer project is more than likely too expensive. So here we are.

There are 4 professional positions that need to be filled for the future of Vernonia's growth, stability and livability: #1- A City Administrator (full-time or part-time is yet to be determined), #2- A Working Public Works Director, #3- An Attorney for our Council Meetings and other Special Meetings, and #4- A Financial Manager. In order to do this we have to do one of two things – raise fees or cut services. We are already lacking 1 Police Officer and 1 Public Work Positions, so therefore we will already see a decline of service levels, and I am not going further down that road. I have been attending the most detailed budget meetings ever in my 7 1/2 year tenure as a Councilor (thanks to Dick Kline), and at present the Budget Committee is talking of recommendations to Council of raising fees on certain items. I won't detail each one, however it will probably cost around \$25 more a month to live in Vernonia.

We face a very crucial crossroad this year. Small towns are made up of a very large cross section of unpaid, usually professionally unqualified volunteers. Not to belittle any of the volunteers but, we have a retired cook, a teacher, a retail owner, an Intel worker, a delightful lady that has lived here all her life, a cabinetmaker, and on and on. There are 3 Positions (Mayor and 2 Council) up for election this year, and I would recommend extreme caution when voting. Do you want a Mayor and Council that is already city savvy, that has made some mistakes and admits it, or do you want 3 new individuals to try and guide us down the path of the future?

I have learned a great deal of things over the last 7 1/2 years, trust no-one, believe no-one, go to the source, check it out thoroughly, don't take anyone's word for it, listen, and ask more questions.

Shortly we will have a new Interim City Administrator on board to guide the City and City Council in the right direction and for short-term decision-making. He will be our bridge to a new City Administrator and success.

County Election Results Are In

By Scott Laird

In what was one of the most interesting set of primary elections in recent years in Columbia County, local residents elected a new Sheriff for the first time since 1996, and incumbent County Commissioner Joe Corsiglia lost his bid for re-election. Results were unofficial at press time.

Jeff Dickerson, an Oregon State Police Patrolman who offered to bring a new perspective and new ideas to the County Sheriff's office won the election, defeating Jerry Simmons by a margin of 54% to 39%. Dickerson avoided a run off by receiving over 50% of the votes cast. By securing a majority of the votes in a three-candidate race, Dickerson will be the only name on the ballot in November. He will still need to get the majority of votes in November and would take office on January 1, 2009, but by virtue of his victory on May 20 no other names will appear on the ballot.

"I want to thank all those who contributed to the success of this campaign," Dickerson said following his victory. "This was a hard-fought race, and I could not have made it over the top without the commitment of so many people to see this through to the end."

In the County Commissioners races, Earl Fisher of Clatskanie won the Democratic nomination for County Commissioner - Position No. 1, defeating Corsiglia by a margin of 63 % to 36%. Fisher is a former school superintendent and the current chair of the Columbia County Commission on Families and Children. Fisher will face Glen Dorschler, the former Mayor of Scappoose, who defeated Warren Nakkela in the Republican Primary in the November general election.

In the other County Commissioner race for Position No. 3 in November, Tony Hyde the Republican incumbent from Vernonia who ran unopposed in the primary will face Pat Zimmerman who ran unopposed in the Democratic primary.

Eight of the nine candidates for County Commissioner and Sheriff participated in a "Meet the Candidates" Forum organized by Vernonia's Voice on May 8th in Vernonia. The candidates answered questions by a panel of local residents and were then available in an open house setting to meet and talk with the audience informally. About fifty community members attended the forum. Vernonia's Voice hopes to do similar types of events this fall that could include local city council and mayor candidates, as well as county commissioner and judicial candidates.

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