

CityNews...

City Council August 4, 2008

Council Agrees on Goals and Priorities for Upcoming Year...

The Vernonia City Council approved a list of goals that it identified through a survey presented to them by Interim City Administrator Jim Johnson. Among the priorities identified were: to complete a six-year financial forecast for the city general fund; create a water storage basin plan to reduce flows in winter and increase flows in summer; develop a storm drainage plan for the city; update the wastewater facilities plan then proceed with design work; implement sludge removal from wastewater treatment lagoons; actively participate in the Oregon Solutions School Siting Committee; look at replacing the fourth police officer position; replace and repair police equipment including installing each car with video recording system; and researching funding sources to augment police programs.

Council Agrees to take Recommendations from City Committees for Rate Increases...

Council agreed to have City Committees make recommendations for rate increases and additional fees for city services in their areas. During the budget process last spring, the Budget Committee had recommended fee increases and additional fees in order to

alleviate growing budget shortfalls and to help make capital funds more self supporting. Council decided to have the Committees make fee change recommendations before enacting any changes. Rate increase will be discussed at a pubic hearing on September 15th.

Council Agrees to Salary for Administrator Search...

Council agreed to a salary of \$70,000 to be used in the recruiting profile in the search for a new permanent City Administrator.

Council Accepts Design for Dirt Jump Park...

Council approved a schematic design for a Dirt Jump Park that will be one element of the Vernonia Bicycle Skills Park project. The design was submitted by Alta Planning and Design and had received approval by the Vernonia Parks Committee. The design includes a series of dirt jumps, a dual slalom course, a pump track area, and a technical skills area.

Council Approves Street Repair...

Council approved the award of a bid for \$132,810.50 to S-2 Contractors for street paving repairs caused by flood damage. FEMA will pay 75% of the costs, and a special public works grant from the State of Oregon has been secured for the remaining 25%.

Streets scheduled to be included in the repairs are Weed Avenue, Maple Street, Adams Street, State Street, Heather Street, the intersection at Mist Drive and Birch Street, and Washington Street.

City Council August 18, 2008

Council Agrees to Create Resolution for Police Officer Training Fees...

Council directed Interim City Administrator Jim Johnson to create a draft resolution that would institute a Police Officer Training Fee assessment on Vernonia Justice Court fines. The resolution would determine the fee amount. This resolution was to be up for discussion at the September 2nd City Council Meeting.

Council Approves Recruitment Profile for City Administrator Search...

City Council approved a recommended recruitment profile to be used during the upcoming search for candidates for the permanent City Administrator.

Council Gives City Administrator Power to Sign Closing Documents...

City Council passed a resolution giving the Interim City Administrator authorization to sign all documents in regards to the sale of the old City Hall Building. (See related article)

Vernonia Needs You!

By Cindy Ball

As many of you know, I am the newest of the City Councilors. For those of you who don't know me, I am both a former City Councilor and past Mayor of Vernonia. I became interested in emergency response before I moved to Vernonia, taking my first CERT class in 1994. When I first joined City Council 10 years ago, I knew we needed to be self-sufficient due to our remote location. My initiation into Vernonia emergency response began when I worked with Fire Chief Epler to revise the city's emergency plan. I learned a lot during that process, and what I learned convinced me that we could never have too many emergency responders and volunteers.

During the flood of 2007, I was amazed to see so many people turning their backs on their own needs and stepping forward to help others. The staff from the Vernonia Police Department (VPD), Fire District, and City Hall, as well as many individuals who placed themselves at the disposal of Incident Command, worked together for "the greater good." There have been many public thanks to all the emergency responders. I echo those thanks.

Now for the pitch: In spite of the many volunteers that give so freely of their time, **Vernonia could use more of you.**

The Vernonia Rural Fire District (VRFD) is recruiting volunteers. The sign on the front of the fire hall has been there for several months. Ask your friends who are firefighters why they volunteer. While you might hear about the great uniforms they get to wear or the excitement, the likely response will probably have to do with wanting to help others.

Vernonia Volunteer Ambulance Association (VVAA) would love to have more members. The VVAA volunteers provide emergency medical help twenty-four hours a day. For those of you who may be intrigued by this idea, you can arrange a ride-along and get firsthand experience. Metro West Ambulance offers classes locally for First Responder and Basic level EMT. Financial aid is sometimes available for tuition and books.

Vernonia's Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) is another option. In the past several years, CERT volunteers have worked with the Vernonia Police Department, searching for lost people or providing support during city events (Jamboree, KUPL concert). With an ongoing series of classes in town, you have the opportunity to become civilian support for our professional responders. Being a member of CERT in Vernonia is different than most everywhere else. CERT has become useful due to our remote location and has been called out to provide assistance in other communities.

While I have absolutely no desire to participate in another emergency of any kind, I am forced to believe that, whether or not I like it, there will be other disasters in my future. These range from being the first person on scene at a car accident to events like the floods of 1996 and 2007. I am not a highly trained volunteer, but when there is need I show up. I have gone on welfare checks, made endless pots of coffee, directed traffic, answered phones, tracked teams dispatched to incidents, and handed out bottles of water. I help because I can, and you can, too.

There are volunteer opportunities in a wide range of skill levels. From the Vernonia School District to the Senior Center, religious or secular agencies — nearly every organization in Vernonia would love your help. In December, all these agencies went to work rescuing, feeding, clothing, and sheltering friends and strangers. We could have used more hands. No matter how many helped, we could have used more.

I don't volunteer for the high pay (volunteer = no salary) or the fame — certainly not for the glamour (think 12-hour days and all the chaos you need). **I volunteer because there is need. I volunteer because I can.**

If you are interested in finding out more about volunteer opportunities in Vernonia, make a call.

Vernonia Community Emergency Response Team: 503-429-7335

Vernonia Volunteer Ambulance Association: 503-429-4600

Vernonia Volunteer Firefighters Association: 503-429-8252

Vernonia Sells Old City Hall Building

Property is Sold for \$67,000 in a Cash Sale

At a special meeting of the Vernonia City Council on August 6, the councilors decided to accept an offer from Samuel and Elenora Semerjian to sell them the old city hall building, located at 919 Bridge Street in Vernonia for a \$67,000 cash offer.

According to the Historic Walking Tour of Vernonia, the building was the Safeway grocery store from 1935 until sometime in the 1950's. The guide says, "We believe the first store here might have been Skagg's United Store in 1924." Old city hall also housed the police station and the city's library.

In recent years the building has deteriorated. The roof leaks, the plumbing has problems, the electrical systems needs to be upgraded, and the rear of the building is in need of structural repair work.

The building and land were recently appraised by independent appraiser Jeff Benham. He valued the property at \$85,000.

According to Mayor Sally Harrison, the City decided to accept an offer of less than the appraised value for a number of reasons. The mayor said the City was worried about the expense of making roof repairs as winter approaches and Councilors wanted to get the property back into private hands and back on the tax rolls as quickly as possible. The sale has the added benefit of filling-up another storefront along the city's main street. And, the mayor said, "We're glad that the new owners plan on opening a new business and employing more Vernonia residents."

The transaction should close by the end of August. Within six months the City will remove the building's small addition, housing a real estate office, which will then connect the courtyard behind it to Bridge Street.

If you'd like more information, or to schedule an interview with the Interim City Administrator, please call 503-429-5291x102 or email jim@vernonia-or.gov.



INVITES YOU TO ATTEND:

“MEET THE CANDIDATES”

An evening of Questions and Answers with candidates for :
Columbia County Commissioner and Vernonia City Council

THURSDAY, September 18TH @ 7 PM
at the VERNONIA SCOUT CABIN

Vernonia's Voice wants to ensure that all citizens have the opportunity to be informed before Election Day on November 4th. That's why we organized this evening with our local candidates. The format will include opening statements from all candidates, then questions from a panel of pre-selected Vernonia citizens. An open-house when citizens can ask questions of the candidates in a more informal setting will follow.

Need more info?- Contact Scott Laird at 503-367-0098 or scott@vernoniasvoice.com