

CityNews...

City Council February 2, 2009

Council Hears from Students on Two Issues...

The Rock 'Em Sock 'Em Robots Lego Team, a group of students aged 9-14, presented council with the idea of Amphibious floating homes as an option for flood mitigation. The students researched the idea of floating homes similar to those being used in Holland. The group asked council to consider this option and to talk with FEMA about approving the use of amphibious houses. Members of the team making the presentation were Bridger Stewart, Jacob Eyrick, Kaitlyn Eyrick, Bill Oregon, Megan Ely, Brad Ely and Anthony Pelster.



The Rock 'Em Sock 'Em Robotics Lego Team tells City Council their idea for amphibious houses as flood mitigation

Emily Mitchell and Kaitlyn Carr, members of Vernonian's Ford Institute Leadership Program class, asked the council to consider the idea of a community amphitheater project, which could be used to hold concerts, a community drama program, and increase business in Vernonia. Mayor Sally Harrison expressed support for the project, while noting that the project would need to find a location, get planning commission approval and secure funding before it could be built. Interim Police Chief Mike Kay mentioned that he would be willing to work with the interested parties to move the project forward.



Emily Mitchell and Kaitlyn Carr address City Council about a community amphitheater

Council Chooses Committee Assignments...

The city council has been assigned to positions with City Committees to act as liaison to the council, and regularly attend those meetings. Councilor Brett Costley will attend Parks Committee Meetings, Kevin Hudson will attend Public Works Committee and the Unmet Needs Committee, Cindy Ball, the Cemetery Committee, and the to be formed Public Safety Committee, Randy Parrow will attend the Library and the Community Learning Center Committee, and Mayor Sally Harrison will liaison with the Airport and Economic Development Committee.

Chief Kay Announces Acquisition of Used Equipment...

Interim Police Chief Mike Kay announced that he has acquired a Zodiac Mark II rescue boat which will be permanently stationed in Vernonia. The Rescue Boat and motor were purchased with \$2,300 donated by the Vernonia Lions Club. Kay has also leased a 2004 Ford F250 King Cab from the State of Oregon for \$230 per month. The vehicle has 43,000 miles. During a later conversation, Chief Kay clarified that the two Ford Ranger trucks that the city leased for \$70/ month each, and were discussed at the January 19 City Council Meeting, would both be used by the Public Works Department, and the Ford F250 was replacing the Ranger initially intended for use by the Police Department.



The Zodiac Rescue boat the Vernonia Police Department has procured, along with the engine that was purchased with a \$2300 donation from the Vernonia Lions Club

Senior Citizens Police Academy Underway...

Interim Chief Kay announced that the Senior Citizen Police Academy has begun with twenty-seven participants. The Academy is designed to provide information during eight classes including topics such as narcotics, emergency preparation, and Fraud and Scams. Kay stated this is a unique program and is the only program of its kind in the county, and the closest program like it is in Boise, Idaho.

Police Department Declares Vehicle Surplus...

Council approved Chief Kay's request to declare the 2004 Crown Victoria patrol car as surplus. Kay stated this was part of a plan to down size the fleet from six to four vehicles. The current fleet consists of a 2007 Ford expedition, which is also the K-9 unit, a 2007 Dodge Charger patrol car, a 2006 Ford Crown Victoria patrol car, and the new 2004 Ford F250 utility truck. The department is currently attempting to sell the 2004 Crown Victoria and 2000 Expedition that were declared surplus.

Police Request Reallocation Funds...

Interim Chief Kay has acquired two completely refurbished camera systems, allowing the Police Department to request reallocation of funds that had been allocated for the purchase of a new ICOP Camera system. Chief Kay stated that he would like the funds to be reallocated for "...other department needs, that are pretty major needs, after the last storm...to get the vehicles ready to go." Kay went on to state that funds would be used "...to get these two camera systems installed. And that would mean that every car in our police fleet has a camera on board. Which in my opinion is more beneficial for us."

Council Approves Commercial Use at Airport...

The City council considered and approved a request from Mike Seager, for limited commercial use of the Vernonia Airport. Seager is a part time flight instructor. Mr. Sealer's request stated that he would only be using the airport to meet students, who he would then fly to the Scappoose Airport in

order to conduct training. Seager stated in his email request that he trains about 175 students each year who stay for about three nights.

Council Approves Amendments to Fee Schedule...

Council approved the following amendments to the Fee Schedule: A \$35.00 fee to turn service on or off and \$102.00 Refundable Security Deposit for water service inside the city; a \$60.00 fee to turn service on or off and a \$102.00 Refundable Security Deposit for service outside the city; and a \$5.00 monthly fee each, for water and sewer when there is no service for a customer. The city also made an adjustment to Administrative and Planning Fees, so that when two or more reviews are required for a land action, then the highest of the fees is charged, or the fee will be equal to the actual cost of reviewing the request, whichever is greater.

A discussion was held concerning multi family unit housing, and the change in fee structure that council previously adopted. Council instructed Interim City Administrator Jim Johnson to return in two weeks with a plan and an impact analysis, if council were to restructure or phase in those rates, allowing relief for current property owners who have seen large increases in their billing. Many multi family units in the city previously were charged for only one meter and then usage. Under the new system, multi units are charged service for each individual unit.

City Council February 17, 2009

Parrow Requests Funds Go Back Into General Fund...

Councilman Randy Parrow suggested that funds that had been specially allocated to the Police Department for the purchase of an ICOP camera system, but were not used by the Police Department, be returned to the General Fund, and then reallocated when specific needs were identified. Interim Police Chief Mike Kay agreed to submit a proposal with an itemized list for use of the funds, and went on to clarify that his intention was to use the funds to meet a list of Department needs that was submitted to council in October, and for repairs to the 2007 Ford Expedition incurred during the December storms, and also to help acquire equipment for storm preparation, such as generators through the Military Surplus Program.

Council Amends Fee Schedule, Again...

Council created two new categories and rates for water billing: Multiple Dwelling---Master Meter, \$226.00 per month for each Property for the first 2,000 gallons of water used per unit, plus \$1.25 for each additional 1,000 gallons used; and Mobile Home Park---Master Meter, \$1,688.00 for the first 2,000 gallons of water used per unit, plus \$1.25 for each additional 1,000 gallons used. This amendment is intended to address the large increase in rates incurred by two property owners with multi family units.

Police Department To Use Prevention Coalition Funds...

Interim Police Chief Mike Kay announced that the Executive Committee of the Vernonia Prevention Coalition has decided to have the police department handle the Coalition Coordinator and Mentoring positions that are funded through the grant the Coalition recently received. Kay stated that his department would take on prevention/intervention duties, which would include having an officer working on the school campus--- similar to a school resource position. That officer would also be available to teach classes, be on campus to handle police situations, and act as a mentor to students. Kay announced that he would be assuming the coalition Coordinator duties and that current staff would absorb the work of Mentoring Coordinator and be reimbursed through the grant for extra time spent. Time spent on Prevention Coalition responsibilities would be tracked with separate time cards. Kay also announced the re-creation of a school OSSOM Program that already has forty-three high school students involved.

From Our Elected Officials

By Senator Betsy Johnson

As the 75th Legislative Assembly progresses in Salem, I am joining with my colleagues in the Senate to tackle the many challenges that confront Oregon. My largest concerns are the budget shortfalls of approximately \$855 million for the current budget cycle and the projected \$3 billion shortfall for the next budget cycle. These shortfalls will not only hinder state agencies from providing critical services to Oregonians, but may also require us to prioritize and restructure state programs designed to assist local governments with ongoing challenges.

The challenges we face lie in the slow economy. Money is tight, businesses are closing, employees are losing their jobs, and fewer tax revenues are being collected as a result. In an effort to cushion Oregonians from the full impacts of the recession, I voted to pass the Oregon Jobs Stimulus Plan. This bill authorizes the State of Oregon to undertake a bonding package thereby providing \$175 million to be spent on crucial state-owned 'shovel ready' maintenance projects targeted to start by April 1. These projects will create jobs by funding long-deferred maintenance at Oregon's colleges, universities, and other state facilities that Oregonians depend on every day. The reach of this spending is limited but it is my hope that this effort will get us on the path to recover.

Recently, I watched with keen interest the passage of the federal stimulus bill that contains a significant amount of money dedicated to local public works projects. While it is unclear how these dollars will be distributed, and how much of it can be contributed to Ver-

nonia's wastewater treatment facility, please be assured that I will be in close contact with the federal and state officials, and advocate strongly for Vernonia's needs. I am especially mindful of the needs of the schools in Vernonia. The Oregon Solutions process has provided a strong foundation that I can use as a platform to advocate for the construction of new schools outside the reach of flood waters. This is my greatest concern, and it is my goal to do everything possible to help the citizens of Vernonia with this difficult challenge.

As I consider these difficult times, I am reminded of Governor Tom McCall's words: "Heroes are not giant statues framed against a red sky. They are people who say, 'This is my community and it's my responsibility to make it better.'" Vernonia is blessed with many "heroes", and it is through these people that we will see ourselves through the challenges that lie ahead.

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