

Message from the Mayor

By Mayor Sally Harrison

I thought I'd set to words some of the things that have been going on in Vernonia. When there are no glaring headlines, one may assume things aren't happening. Nothing could be further from the truth. I've learned, being your Mayor, that anything worth doing takes time, lots of time and lots of paperwork. SCHOOLS:

Of course, the major project for our community is the building of safe, green, new schools for our children. The site has been chosen, and the Bond amount arrived at, \$13 million, which equates to \$1.90 per \$1,000 assessed value. Sounds like a lot of money because it is a lot of money. Originally, the Architects presented a plan for a campus that would cost \$48 million. But the School District and School Board have asked them to adjust their plan and try to find ways to reduce the cost to between \$35 and \$40 million-- still a lot of money. But, let's also look at the benefits when the Bond passes. First, the other \$20-plus million will become available. That means we would have a \$35-\$40 million school system for our investment of \$13 million. Also, the value of your properties will increase. It may sound melodramatic, but our town will slowly decline without good schools, for they are the cornerstone of any community. Economic development will dry up, the costs of other services needed will increase because there will be fewer sharing the expenses. I can't stress enough the importance of passing the School Bond. The other stake-holders-- Federal, State, and Philanthropic-- need to know that we are willing to make sacrifices for the sake of our children and our town. Please, attend the School Town Hall meetings and become informed on what's planned, ask questions, know the facts.

WASTEWATER:

The sewer rehab project is going swimmingly, no pun intended. Our engineering firm of Brown & Caldwell is working double-time because here again we're on a tight schedule to make ourselves eligible for major grant awards. We must be shovel-ready by 02-15-10. The Public Works Committee received cost analysis for eight different options from Brown & Caldwell this past week. They narrowed it down to four options that will need more information before a final choice can be made. We are very fortunate to have contracted with former Interim City Administrator Jim Johnson to stay with this and the school projects, so we can stay on task while City Administrator Bob Young gets up to speed. STORMWATER:

Along with the sewer, we now have a viable Storm Water Plan-- very important first step for the City to be able to correct problems that have been with us forever. Soon we will also have a rate study. Then we can correctly explain why you and I pay the utility bills we do. A concept way overdue!

BOB YOUNG:

We are so pleased to have our new City Administrator, Bob Young, on board. Bob and his wife are presently renting a home, but hope to buy soon, and be an integral part of our community. Bob maintains an open door policy, so feel free to stop by City Hall and say Hello!

CROSSWALKS:

Have you seen the new crosswalk, by City Hall on Weed Avenue? It is a new kind of application that promises to outlast the blacktop itself. The stamped and painted crosswalks, unfortunately, couldn't hold up to Vernonia traffic. ODOT is going to replace all

crosswalks with this new technique.

COLUMBIA COUNTY RIDER:

I know there's been some buzz about the fact that we have bus service to the Hillsboro-Beaverton area daily. This is wonderful news for PCC students, commuting workers, etc... It opens possibilities to hook up with Tri-Met and Max. Check it out!

FLOOD WATER ABATEMENT:

The City has a contract with the Corps of Engineers for mapping of the possibilities to Control Flood Waters during our next flooding event. LIDAR is a major component for this to be done. Now, don't expect me to give you the definitive description of LIDAR. All I know is that it's a geographical photography process, very sophisticated. I'm eagerly waiting for the Corps' recommendations and, more importantly, solutions to our flooding. I'll keep you posted.

ALUMNI FOR SCHOOLS:

I have a challenge for all the Alumni of Vernonia High! The Class of '59 had its 50th Class Reunion recently, (we had a wonderful time) and they have donated \$410 so far to the rebuilding fund for our schools. I challenge other classes to match or exceed this amount. All donations are tax-deductible and all proceeds will go to the building of new schools. We received our education on someone else's dime, now it's our turn to ante up the dime for future generations' education. Please contact me at 503-429-8425 or sallyharrison@verizon.net or at 1689 N. Mist Drive, Vernonia, OR 97064. I will be keeping records of whom, what class and how much, so we'll have a winner to announce.

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact me.

What's the Plan Stan? A Monthly Update on City Planning

By Seth Lenaerts

In the last six months, a few interesting studies have been done in Vernonia. These studies were developed to forecast future population, economic growth and future land needs. State law requires cities to periodically update City inventories and create future projections to help prepare and plan for the next twenty years. Generally, all three of the reports are saying the same thing. Vernonia is in for a slow 20 years of growth. What does this mean? What are the implications? And should Vernonia care?

The characteristics of a city play a major role in attracting or discouraging growth. The City of Alexandria, Egypt, for example, was and continues to be quite the City. Imagine asking a person in 50 B.C. why they chose to settle in the City of Alexandria, Egypt. They would most likely say 'work,' since the

City was a trading hub and offered a variety of jobs; or maybe they liked the beach and the climate, since Alexandria was located on the Mediterranean. A few residents may have just really liked cats and appreciated all the cat statutes. Personally, during the era of Cleopatra, I would have enjoyed having a chariot with the bumper sticker, "The ruler of my empire is hotter than the ruler of your empire." All of these would be legitimate answers, and if you ask people today why they live or choose to live in a specific place, the answers probably wouldn't be much different: work, geography/climate, wanting to be around people with similar interests or chances to recreate.

Although the reasons why people live or decide to live in places seem to be more or less the same, the priorities are much different. This is due to several factors. One major difference about today's job market from any other time in history is the fluid nature of today's

work force. Ask somebody who is close to retiring how many jobs they have had and most will say fewer than seven. Compare that to a worker just entering the workforce who will probably have 20-30 throughout their career!

So what does this mean for cities trying to attract people and business? Tons, actually, but one aspect that is especially interesting is that the priorities of new workers are changing and evolving almost as quickly as the technology and job market. For cities to stay competitive in attracting skilled workers, they too must adapt. Recently, a study done at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point surveyed junior and senior students about life after graduation; specifically, about jobs, quality of life and livable cities. Results showed students were more influenced by amenity values (like recreation, shopping, music, geography, schools, parks) than jobs. Those surveyed even put their money where their mouths

were. When asked if they were willing to take pay cuts to live in a location that did have the amenity values, a significant amount said yes and many went even further by saying that certain amenities were so valuable that no wage could compensate!

This study, along with others, came to the same conclusions. They suggest not only a change in the mentality of future workers, but also a change in lifestyle. Historically, the two highest priorities for entry level employees were finding a steady job and staying close to family. With this no longer being the case, cities are going to have to adapt or market their city to attract skilled workers.

The changing market and potential employee perceptions create opportunities and risks. In next month's article, I will bring this conversation home and focus on implications for Vernonia. Until next time---you don't have to be coy, Roy, just listen to me.

Geography Matters

By Ben Fousek

Having the last two months to research monkeys and palm trees in Vernonia, I have come to a rather surprising conclusion: there are no monkeys or palm trees in Vernonia. I hope you are not as disappointed as myself. This turn of events will give me the opportunity to discuss something else entirely.

I have been working the last few months on the user interface for the City's GIS. I am happy to say it's up and running. The City of Vernonia Information Portal (CVIP) is a user-friendly way for city staff to access data related to each parcel of land in Vernonia. In one place a user can see what the land use zoning of a particular parcel is as well as flood zone information. The CVIP allows the user to view the property in several maps showing different geospatial data, including the flood zones, natural resources and utilities. Another function of the CVIP is to manage city operations such as issuing and managing building permits. And, as I've

mentioned in previous articles, as time goes by and more and more data is added to the Vernonia GIS, the City will have reporting abilities. As a quick example, I've added a simple interface for city staff to mark a property as a rented property. It will take some time, but after a year or so, we will have a pretty good idea of how many rentals are in Vernonia and the spatial distribution thereof.

I have been meeting regularly with Bob Young, Vernonia's new city administrator, and others and we are gearing up to develop new GIS programs for the City. Here's a brief overview of a couple projects. I won't get into specific detail here, as these projects are in the initial stages.

1) A CVIP module for the Vernonia Police Department to input police reports and other crime data concerning Vernonia. Quarterly reports with crime data and maps will be made available to the Police Department to help provide better public safety for Vernonia.

2) Another public safety concern is the condition, operational quality and exact location of fire hydrants in town. A plan is being put together to map the fire hydrants and collect data about them. The end result will be replacement of hydrants in need thereof, a system to track maintenance, and the ability for the proper authorities to check that new development in Vernonia meets the minimum distance from a fire hydrant.

These projects and those to come are ways that the Vernonia GIS is working toward more effective government at less cost. Expect to hear more about some of these projects in the future.

In wrapping up this month's article I would like to invite you to check out the public access version of the CVIP at <http://www.klssurveying.com/vernonia/>. See what flood zones cross your property, or read up on the characteristics of the soil your home is built on. Until next time...