

# Vernonia City News...

## At the October 5, 2009 City Council Meeting:

**Council Hears Update on Bike Skills Park Plan--** City Council heard a presentation by Bryan Cole of McKay and Sposito, Inc., an Engineering Firm that has been contracted to update the Vernonia Bicycle Skills Park Master Plan and provide final engineering for development of the park infrastructure. Cole provided an updated diagram of proposed facilities including parking, restrooms, picnic pavilion and a bike wash station. Cole also discussed a proposed timeline which would complete construction by the fall of 2010.

**Council Approves Expenditure for VHS Yearbook--** At the request of Mayor Sally Harrison, Council approved spending \$100 for advertising in the Vernonia High School Yearbook and to help support students who are unable to afford the cost of a yearbook.

**Two Citizens Told Topics From the Floor Items are Out of Order--** Ed Johnson, who attempted to distribute a handout and discuss a City personnel matter that he had previously taken to City Administrator Bob Young, was told his topic was out of order and that City personnel matters are not open to discussion in open City Council Meetings. Johnson was told if he was not satisfied with Young's handling of the issue, he would need to take it to the County District Attorney. Clark McGaugh expressed his displeasure at this, and was reminded that State Public Meeting Law requires public attendance but does not require public participation at City Council meetings. Council allows the public to speak at public meetings as a consideration. Johnson was later told he could discuss personnel matters privately with a Council member, but not in open Council session.

**Council Approves Signing Grant Administration Contract--** In a housekeeping matter, Council approved signing a contract with Community Action Team to administer

a Community Development Block Grant for a Wastewater Facilities Plan Update. The contract is retroactive to February 13, 2009.

**Washington Avenue Paving Project Bids Lower Than Expected--** New Public Works Director Bob Ruhl told council that he has received a low bid of \$36,003 for the Washington Avenue Paving Project. The bids received were considerably less than the \$96,000 originally anticipated, in part due to work performed by Ruhl and the Vernonia Public Works crew. Ruhl said he was currently researching whether the grant funds awarded for this project could be used to perform additional work. Ruhl also provided Council with a report of some other items his department has been working on.

**Council Adopts Resolution to Allow Use of CDBG Grant--** After hearing from Dan Brown, Council adopted a Resolution that will allow use of excess funds from a Community Development Block Grant awarded to Columbia County to be used within Vernonia city limits for property buy-outs and demolitions of substantially damaged structures during the flood of 2007. Brown reported that both Columbia County and the City of Vernonia received a \$500,000 grant. Brown stated it is unlikely Columbia County will use all of the funds it was awarded and desires to use the remainder of the funds in Vernonia.

**Council Declares Vehicle as Surplus--** Council declared as surplus a 1984 Dodge Pickup used by the Public Works Department.

## At the October 19, 2009 City Council Meeting:

**Mayor Accepts Letters of Resignation from Cemetery Committee--** Mayor Sally Harrison accepted letters of resignation from two members of the Vernonia Cemetery Beautification Committee-- from longtime member Ralph Keasey and from eight-year member Ellen Meyer

for health reasons. Harrison noted that these resignations leave two vacancies on that committee.

**Council Hears, Approves Airport Changes--** Council was made aware that the Airport Committee has changed its monthly meeting date to the first Wednesday of the month. Council later passed a resolution based on a recommendation from the Airport Committee to officially change the name of the Vernonia Airfield to the "Vernonia Municipal Airport."

**Police Updates--** Police Chief Frank Grace submitted a written report of recent police activity of note to Council, which he then discussed. Among the items he brought to the attention of Council: All non-criminal detox cases will no longer be held at the Columbia County Jail, but need to be transported to the Hooper Detoxification in NE Portland. Grace noted that this is because of staff shortages at the jail and will require additional local police time-out-of-service when this occurs; a second cougar sighting has occurred in the Vernonia area; a Resource partners meeting was planned for October 28th to bring together potential partners for the city during major emergency events; a new Police Blotter format will be available on the police department website beginning November 1st; confirmed that three juveniles were arrested on September 13th on the Middle School grounds with Molotov Cocktails, rope and a flashlight. Grace noted this is still an ongoing investigation.

**Paving Project to Move Forward--** After an in-depth report by Public Works Director Bob Ruhl, Council passed a motion to award a paving contract to Hoss Paving, Inc., for a planned paving project on Washington Avenue. Council also authorized the City Administrator to take necessary actions to maximize use of available funding sources. The city has received a grant for \$96,000 to do the work, and accepted a low bid of \$36,003 from Hoss Paving, Inc.

## Police Promotions on Schedule to Take Effect

The promotions of Vernonia Police Sergeant Mike Kay and Officer Mike Conner, that were announced during the October 5 City Council meeting, are still scheduled to take effect, according to Vernonia Police Chief Frank Grace.

Grace, in a recent interview, confirmed that he is still in the process of finalizing the job descriptions for both positions that will establish responsibilities and tasks. "I am looking at November 2," responded Grace when asked when the promotions were expected to take effect.

The promotion ceremony of Kay to Captain and

Conner to Sergeant was scheduled to take place, according to a pre-distributed agenda, during that October 5 City Council meeting. Mayor Sally Harrison, with approval from a majority of her councilors, asked that the pinning ceremony be delayed so she could have some questions answered. At the beginning of the council meeting, Harrison confirmed that the promotions would still be taking place.

Grace, in his interview, explained the need for the promotions. "Everyone in the Department, obviously, does patrol," said Grace, "but there is a need to have a Captain's

position, as authorized by the City Council, to do more of the administrative tasks. Actually, a lot of our tasks (the Captain's and Chief's) will be parallel to each other."

Grace said the job descriptions would be available when they were complete, and also confirmed that when established, the Captain's position would be an "exempt position," meaning it is not part of the union that represents the rest of the officers in the department.

Grace said he is referring any questions about personnel and officer backgrounds to the City Attorney.

## Vernonia Chamber To Host First Annual Conference

The Vernonia Area Chamber of Commerce will host an all-day conference for its members on November 14th at the Vernonia Community Learning Center.

The theme of this year's conference is "Pay it Forward," and the cost is free to all current or new prepaid members.

Attendees will enjoy a Continental Breakfast, a series of workshops including business economics and finances, a training on the Chamber's new website-- learning how to manage your own business page, uploading pictures, adding maps, or updating customers, customer service, and the Vernonia Mainstreet Program. The conference will include a planning session on ways to meet members' needs. Attendees will also be treated to a presentation on stress reduction by Carol McIntyre, ND, LCa.

The Pay It Forward principle is

simple... do something for someone with no expectation but that they do something for someone else. In these economic times, that have left many small businesses across the country struggling, the local Vernonia Area Chamber has decided to support their member businesses by providing tools to help them navigate through this storm.

Attendees will enjoy a catered lunch and the conference will conclude with a dinner that will kick off this year's "Holiday Bucks" program.

This event is open to everyone in the Vernonia Area Chamber of Commerce service area, but due to space limitations, will be limited to the first thirty RSVP's.

For more information, contact the Chamber at 503-429-6081 or via e-mail at: [Info@vernoniachamber.org](mailto:Info@vernoniachamber.org).

## "Holiday Bucks" Helps Support Local Businesses

It's "Holiday Bucks" time again and *The Vernonia Area Chamber of Commerce* will once again be sponsoring this local promotion.

The number one purpose of the Holiday Bucks program is to reward customers for shopping locally and supporting local businesses and the local economy.

Participating in Holiday Bucks is easy. During the promotion, pick up a card at any participating local business. Your local merchant will stamp your card once for every \$5 you spend. Each time you fill a card, turn it in for a chance to win in the weekly drawings. The more you shop locally, the more cards you fill-- the more more cards you fill, the more chances you have to win!

Holiday Bucks will run from Friday, November 20<sup>th</sup> to Saturday, December 19<sup>th</sup>.

Early bird draws on the following Saturdays at Noon for \$25 gift certificates:

November 28<sup>th</sup>  
December 5<sup>th</sup>  
December 12<sup>th</sup>

Grand Finale Drawing for 3 more Gift Certificates (amounts to be determined) on Saturday, December 19<sup>th</sup>.

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