

Vernonia City News...

At the February 22, 2011, City Council Meeting:

Council Votes to Begin Search Process for City Administrator-- In a 3-2 vote, Council approved the start of a search process for new City Administrator candidates using the League of Oregon Cities at a cost to the city of \$6,000. Voting to begin the process were Councilors Willow Burch, Marilyn Nicks, and Kevin Hudson. Councilor Randy Parrow and Mayor Josette Mitchell voted to offer the position to current Interim City Administrator Bill Haack. (See complete story on front page.)

Council Approves Sale of Spencer

Park Property-- Council has approved the sale of the 4.82 acre Spencer Park property to the Vernonia Administrative School District 47J for a purchase price of \$240,000. The new school project is currently under construction on the Spencer Park site. Council held a Legislative Public Hearing to receive public comment on the proposed sale before voting to approve the sale. The City of Vernonia and the Vernonia School District had previously entered into an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) which includes six separate transactions to complete the exchange of property between the City of Vernonia and the School District, including the purchase of the Spencer Park property. The IGA also includes the City purchasing School

District property at the current school site for a park to replace Spencer Park.

Mayor Appoints Stiles to Library Committee-- With Council approval, and based on a recommendation from the Library Committee, Mayor Josette Mitchell appointed Pat Stiles to the Library Committee to complete the term of Orissa Burghard, who has resigned.

Council Approves Minor Changes to SRO Agreement-- Council approved several minor changes to the Agreement between the Vernonia School District, the City of Vernonia, and the Vernonia Prevention Coalition for a Youth Services Resources Officer.

Council Approves Second Reading of Ordinance 872-- Council approved the second reading of Ordinance 872, allowing social gambling. The Ordinance will take effect thirty days from the second reading.

Council Amends Master Fee Schedule Adjusting Cemetery Rates-- Council approved Resolution 06-11, amending the Master Fee Schedule and increasing Cemetery fees.

Council Approves Emergency Preparedness Committee-- Council approved the first and second readings of Ordinance 856, establishing an Emergency Preparedness Committee.

Rebuilding Vernonia: The Rose Avenue Project *continued from front page*

According to Haack, Community Action Team (C.A.T.), based in St. Helens, has stepped forward and become a community partner by helping these three organizations find solutions to their problems-- specifically identifying suitable locations, applying for funding resources and beginning project development. C.A.T. is a locally-controlled, private, not-for-profit corporation, serving Columbia, Clatsop and Tillamook Counties with a main focus of mobilizing resources and addressing the needs of the economically disadvantaged. C.A.T. currently serves over 16,000 persons annually and has extensive experience working with Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), a prime resource for these types of projects. C.A.T. has been working with the Senior Center and Food Bank for years to relocate their facilities and has been a key component in managing Vernonia's flood recovery.

It's important to recognize how much positive work has been accomplished on behalf of the citizens of Vernonia in relation to flood recovery since the Flood of 2007. The community, with the help of FEMA, C.A.T., and Oregon Emergency Management have identified

funding and resources way beyond initial expectations immediately after the flood, allowing for more work to take place and many more entities to be moved out of harm's way, in case another flood were to occur. According to C.A.T. Deputy Director Jim Tierney, almost \$26 million in funding has been secured to date; initial estimates had been in the \$3-\$4 million range.

But still, another flood is almost inevitable. Originally, the 1996 and 2007 floods were both considered 100- or 500-year floods. The Army Corps of Engineers has since revised their projections for our watershed and now predict we can expect floods of that magnitude every twelve to fifteen years. The case for moving vital services is now even stronger.

Since Vernonia began its recovery from the Flood of 2007, many significant things have happened. The Vernonia School District is in the process of moving all three of their schools to a new campus. Many homes and several businesses have been lifted or bought out and demolished. And WOEC's new headquarters is under construction.

But the Health Center, Senior Center and Food

Bank have still not been moved.

All of the vital services that needed to move-- the schools, WOEC, the Senior Center, Food Bank and Health Center-- found a similar situation when they began the search to relocate-- a lack of buildable space within city limits that was suitable for their needs and zoned properly for their facilities.

The site being considered for the Rose Avenue project is currently owned by the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, but a transfer is in the works that will allow it to be acquired by the City of Vernonia. There were some concerns by the Environmental Protection Agency about environmental degradation from previous uses on the site but the State just received a notice of "No Further Action," clearing the way for a liability-free transfer of ownership to the City clearing the way for the race to develop these three projects.

A key question is, "What would be the city's involvement in the project?" According to Tierney, the City, as owners of the property, could lease or possibly sell the land to the organizations who would build their facilities there. If the projects were developed

by the tenants using CDBG funds, the City would have an obligation to hold the title and monitor the continued operation of the buildings for a minimum of five years, similar to the Vernonia Community Learning Center. At the end of the timeframe set by the CDBG funding, the City could choose to sell the buildings to the tenants and have no real role in ongoing operations and little financial responsibility. "There are many ways we can work together to do this," says Tierney.

One other twist to the development plan for the Rose Avenue Project is the inclusion of discussions with Catherine Mater who is currently researching the feasibility of the Forest Health-Human Health Initiative, an alternative opportunity for small forestland owners to be paid to manage their properties by using carbon sequestration credits.

Although Mater's plan includes links to the Vernonia Health Clinic and the use of a Biomass heating generator at the Rose

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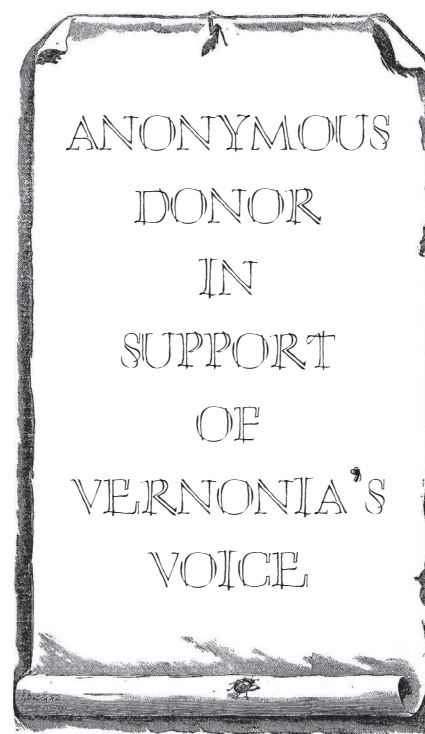


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