

# Vernonia City News...

## At the March 21, 2011 City Council Meeting:

**Council Approves City Administrator Profile**— After a Public Hearing, council approved the City Administrator Profile created by the League of Oregon Cities (LOC) which will be used as part of the search process for candidates for the position.

**City Recognizes CERT Graduates**— Interim Police Chief Mike Connor recognized twenty-two new graduates of the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). CERT educates citizens about disaster preparedness for hazards that may impact their area and trains them in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, and disaster medical operations.

**Tice Makes Wastewater Project Manager Presentation**— George Tice, a member of the City Public Works Committee, made a presentation to Council about the need to hire a Project Manager for the Wastewater Treatment System upgrade. The City has selected a conceptual plan provided by the engineering firm of Brown and Caldwell, which involves constructed wetlands, recycling and a raised dike system. There is a source of funds available through EPA which can be used to secure the services of a professional to manage the project through predesign engineering, final design engineering, construction engineering and construction.

Tice explained that the timeline is critical and that the City intends to use Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds from the State of Oregon for final design. According to Tice, an entity can only have a limited number of CDBG projects open at one time, so having CDBG funds tied up in the Wastewater project prohibits the City from starting other projects that would also use CDGB funds; the Rose Avenue Project is one example.

According to Tice, the City should start the process of hiring a Project Manager by issuing a Request for Qualifications (RFQ). Interim City Administrator Bill Haack explained that there is a draft version of the RFQ and that, because the City is using CDGB funds for the project, the City will be required to have CDGB staff approve the project at each step along the way, which can be time-consuming. Haack also explained that he intends to use an EPA Grant for predesign work. Haack said he hopes the project will be ready to go out to bid in late 2012.

Councilor Willow Burch stated that she didn't understand the need to wait to hire a Project Manager; Haack reiterated that in order for the City to issue the RFQ, CDGB staff must give approval first, for every single step of the project.

**Citizens Offer Suggestions**— Citizen Heather Lewis read a prepared statement on behalf of citizen Sharon Bernal suggesting that the City has lost institutional memory because of constant change, and asking Council to look at the big picture when considering decisions. Lewis/Bernal noted that communication is an ongoing issue and suggested four ways for the citizens of the community to support the Council in the next few

months to collect information, set goals and prioritize projects. 1) The Economic Development Committee will set aside their agenda to meet with Council to update them on current projects and decision making, and it is suggested that all other City Committees do the same; 2) A group of citizens have agreed to host "Community Conversations" which would be a place where specific issues would be presented to the community and concerns and questions would be documented and presented to the appropriate committees and Council, so accurate information can be gathered and presented back to the public; 3) The City should give up managing the building permitting process and it should be returned to the County to eliminate the extra work load on city staff; 4) A subcommittee should be formed to codify City Ordinances, so Council and citizens would have updated rules for making decisions.

**Mayor Appoints Committee Members**— Mayor Josette Mitchell, with approval from Council, appointed Catherine Helmer and Susan Wagner to the City Budget Committee. Prior to the approval, Councilor Willow Burch stated that she was surprised that the process had started and that she hadn't heard about it. Burch stated that when she asked, she was told it was posted on the City website and in the local newspapers. It was also explained during the meeting that the notice had been posted in the usual places around the City, and at City Hall in the window. Burch said she didn't see the posting, that she couldn't find it on the website, and that she doesn't read the newspapers for her own personal reasons. "Once again, I find that things are posted, but the word is not getting out there," said Burch.

**Council Approves of Disposal of Old Computers**— Council approved the disposal of 5 non-functioning computers from the VCLC.

**Council Approves Creation of Three New Job Titles**— At the request of Interim City Administrator Bill Haack, Council approved the creation of three new job titles: a seasonal parks custodian; a Wetlands Maintenance Specialist to manage wetlands created by the Vernonia School District; an assistant to the City Administrator to assist in the Financial and Administrative Services Department which would be an "internship-like" position. Discussions about these new positions would be included in the upcoming budget process.

**Council Approves Appropriation of Streets Stimulus Funding**— Council approved Resolution 07-11, which acknowledges the receipt of a \$25,000 stimulus funding grant for street improvements and places those funds in Street Fund Income in the 2010-2011 budget.

**Council Approves Continuation of \$12 Sewer Fee**— Council approved Resolution 10-11, continuing the \$12.00 Sewer Utility Fee to repay DEQ loan R93642. According to the Resolution, the City has an outstanding loan with Oregon DEQ for \$4.3 million that was used to pay for work completed in Phase I of the Wastewater project, which was due to begin being repaid in May

of 2008. The City has not been paying this loan and has been accumulating \$10,000 in interest per month. The city has approved an interest payment of \$525,517 which was made on March 3, 2011, and DEQ has extended the terms of the loan by twenty years. The City will make annual payments of \$315,000 for current principal balance with the first payment due in September of 2011. In order to make the annual payments, it is necessary to maintain the current \$12.00 per month surcharge per sewer utility connection for a period of twenty years, beginning with the utility payment period ending March 31, 2011, and ending with the payment period ending June 30, 2032.

## At the April 4, 2011, City Council Meeting:

**Council Appoints Budget Officer**— City Council approved Interim City Administrator Bill Haack as the Budget Officer for Fiscal Year 2011-2012.

**Citizens Speak in Support of Kay**— Four citizens, Jesse Lindsley, Jack Lindsley, Richard Mayer and Sandy Welch all spoke during Topics from the Floor in support of Vernonia Police Sergeant Mike Kay, who is currently on paid Administrative Leave. All commended Kay on his police work and with the K-9 Officer Program, as well as with the CERT Team, Little Guy Football, and the Vernonia Prevention Coalition, and other work in the community.

**Council Reconsiders Creation of Job Titles**— After approving a motion to create three new job titles at the March 21<sup>st</sup> City Council Meeting, Councilor Marilyn Nicks asked that the decision be reconsidered. The job titles that had been created (Parks Custodian, Wetlands Maintenance Specialist and Assistant to the City Administrator) would have allowed those positions to be included in the draft budget and discussed as part of the Budget Process for the upcoming fiscal year. Councilor Nicks stated that she felt Council made a hasty decision, that the positions should have been brought forward as three separate entities, that the Assistant to the City Administrator position needed to be looked into further and it was dangerous to lump all three together. Nicks also stated that she was concerned that the Assistant to the City Administrator position was through an internship program and would require

time and energy for staff to train that person.

Mayor Josette Mitchell informed Council that because the Budget Message was scheduled to be delivered on Saturday April 9, 2011, and because all were brought forward in a single motion, there was no time for each position to be brought back to Council individually and would need to be removed from the upcoming budget.

Councilors Kevin Hudson, Nicks and Councilor Willow Burch voted to rescind their previous decision and removed the positions from the budget. When staff was requested by the Mayor Mitchell to return at a later meeting with individual motions for the positions, Interim City Administrator Bill Haack stated that he would not bring it back and would let the idea die. "The Internship would require a significant amount of work and I am not prepared in the next two weeks to get that done. There are too many other things— we have the budget, we have two major [grant] applications moving forward— I'll let it die."

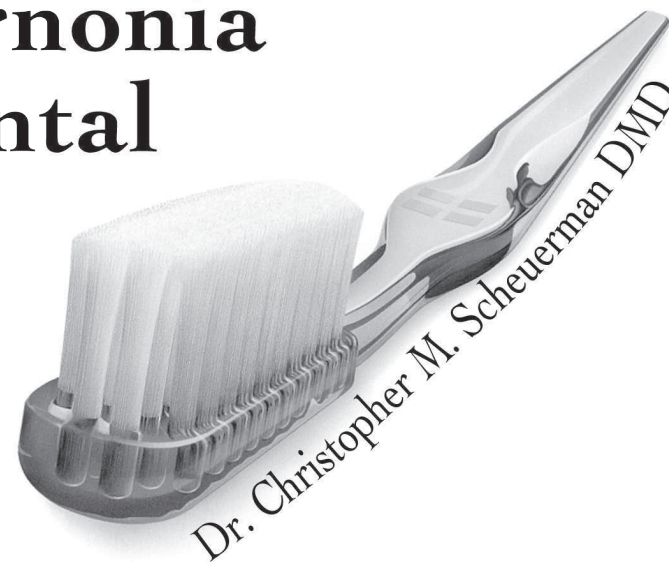
**Council Gives Approval for Sign Makeover**— Sally Harrison, representing the Vernonia Economic Development Committee, requested and received permission from Council to begin a makeover of the large billboard sign at the corner of Bridge Street and Rose Avenue.

**Council Approves MOU for Vital Indicator Project**— Council approved a Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) between the City of Vernonia Economic Development Committee and Oregon State University for work on the Vital Vernonia Indicator Project.

**Council Approves Transfer of Funds for VCLC**— Council approved the transfer of \$408.00 from within the Vernonia Community Learning Center (VCLC) budget, from Contingency to Operations and Maintenance, for repair of the furnace.

**Council Approves Ordinance to Protect Drinking Water**— Council Approved Ordinance 874, repealing Ordinance 658, relating to instituting and enforcing a cross-connection control and backflow prevention program. The ordinance updates new rules and regulations. Council approved both readings of the Ordinance, allowing it to take effect immediately.

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