

# VERNONIA'S voice

reflecting the spirit of our community

volume5 issue16

## Conner Promoted to Interim Chief

At the August 15, 2011 Vernonia City Council Meeting, Mayor Josette Mitchell and Councilor Randy Parrow approved a proposal to begin restructuring the Vernonia Police Department. Mitchell and Parrow are the only current Council members after the recall of three Councilors.

Mitchell and Parrow first passed a motion that calls for staffing to consist of a Police Chief and three officers. The new staffing levels would eliminate the Sergeant position and require the hiring of two entry level officers. Council then passed a motion that: 1) promoted current Sergeant Michael Conner to Interim Chief; 2) authorized Conner to begin the recruitment process for the two new officers; 3) instructs Interim City Administrator Jim Johnson to return to Council in September with a recommendation for considering Conner for the permanent Police Chief position. Council authorized Johnson to sign an employment agreement with Conner as Interim Chief.

The proposal adopted by Council meets staffing levels suggested by the city insurance carrier, and provides a projected cost savings to the City of over \$40,000 from the approved 2011-12 budget.

According to Mayor Josette Mitchell, Conner does not currently possess all the qualifications to be a Police Chief in Oregon, but the Oregon Department of Police Safety Standards and Training (DPSST) does allow for a police officer to be hired as an Interim Chief while working towards achieving those qualifications. According to Mitchell, DPSST gives an officer hired as an Interim two years to meet state requirements. Mitchell said the City of Vernonia intends to bring in a third party to review Conner's current certifications which will assist the City in developing a work plan to help Conner qualify.

Conner had previously served as the Vernonia Interim Police Chief from September 7, 2010 until May 4, 2011. Conner resigned as Interim Chief and voluntarily stepped down to Sergeant after Interim City Administrator Bill Haack's contract was abruptly terminated.

## WOEC Dedicates New Headquarters



West Oregon Electric Cooperative staff and Board of Directors welcomed their members to their new headquarters in Vernonia on Saturday August 20, 2011 at the Coop's Annual Meeting. The meeting was held inside the truck bays and was followed by a ribbon cutting ceremony and tours of the office facility. General Manager, Marc Farmer and Board Director President Robert Van Natta dedicated the building, along with Clint Jackson and Greg Henes, owners of Five Star Builders, the general contractor for the project; Dennis Beyer, the project architect; and Ed Bouma, project manager.

The move to the new headquarters will take place during the week of September 5-9, and a separate open house for the public is being planned for later in September.

"This new building belongs to the community," said Farmer on several occasions during the meeting and dedication ceremony.



## inside



**9**  
bear  
creek run



**9**  
birkfest  
2011



**10**  
camp  
wilkerson

## Community Town Hall Scheduled

A Community Town Hall will be held on Tuesday, September 13, 2011 from 7:00-9:00 PM in the Vernonia School Cafeteria. An update will be given on the new school campus construction project and staff from Oregon Department of Transportation

will be present to discuss road improvements related to the school project. Planning for the demolition of the old school campus and construction of the new Spencer Park will also be discussed.

## Vernonia Logger Memorial Carving Arrives

Many of you may have noticed a new addition to the front lawn of the Vernonia Pioneer Museum. A chainsaw carving, honoring the Logging Heritage of the Nehalem Valley, has been installed.

Carved in the image of local logger Mike Pihl (complete with blue eyes), the Vernonia Logger Memorial will soon have a plaque with the names of everyone who contributed to the project along with a cover to protect the carving from the elements.

The project is being spearheaded by Shirlee Daughtry and Donna Webb, with assistance from Vernonia Hands-on Art.

