

Vernonia City News...

At the September 19, 2011 City Council Meeting:

City Donates Land for ODOT Project—Council approved the donation of a strip of property along Bridge Street/ Highway 47 that will be used as part of a street widening project at Missouri Avenue. ODOT is planning to construct a left turn lane to provide access to the new school campus. The property being donated is part of the Pioneer Museum property. Because the City owns the property they are entitled to compensation. City staff recommended donating the property because the benefits to the public outweigh the costs. In making the recommendation for the donation city staff also cited that ODOT is providing the funding for the improvements to the intersection, as well as improvements along Missouri Avenue leading to the new school campus. According to the staff report the property would likely be valued at \$24,000.

City Repairs Sewer Line Break

On Sunday September 11, 2011 the Vernonia Public Works staff responded to a sewer leak on the west bank of the Nehalem River along Riverside Drive. Public Works staff turned off the pumping station at Mist Drive and arranged to pump and haul the effluent, moving over 100,000 gallons to the city sewer lagoons until repairs could be made.

Residents living along the Nehalem River were notified and asked to refrain from direct contact with the river water.

The sewer line at the site is between 30-45 feet underground from the top of the bank. The break was found where a manhole column settled and caused the 6" sewer line encased in concrete to fracture. Public Works staff repaired the line, rebuilding and compacting the soil at the site of the trenching and were rebuilding the streambed face with riprap.

"Public Works Foreman Jeff Burch and his team did excellent work," said Vernonia City Administrator Bill Haack.

Haack also said that city representatives were in contact with DEQ and were assured that the city was in compliance with protocols established for handling a sewer line break of this nature.

Haack Updates Council on Work Plan—City Administrator Bill Haack gave Council an update and details on the specific projects he is currently working on, including: 1) New Spencer Park planning process and Bridge Street/ Missouri Avenue Improvements, 2) Wastewater Facility Upgrade Planning, 3) a major sewer line repair along the banks of the Nehalem River, 4) the Vernonia School District Wetlands mitigation project happening on the old mill site, 5) a Water Rate Study, 6) an inventory of city street conditions, 7) a grant application to expand the dock system at Vernonia Lake.

Council Sends Airport Recommendation Back to Committee—Council sent a recommendation from the Airport Committee back, asking for more information and clarification. The Airport Committee had requested that some trees and brush in several locations be removed near the airport runway for safety reasons. In declining to act on the request, Council asked for several things from the Committee: that they identify what the specific safety hazards

are; that they create a work plan for who will remove the trees and who will be responsible for clean up; that they identify which trees they would like to have removed.

Council Approves Police Expenditure for Data Tracking—Council approved an initial expense of \$940.85 for the Vernonia Police Department (VPD) to purchase a computer system firewall from AdvanTel Networks and a \$100 monthly expense for the VPD to receive services from the Portland Police Data System (PPDS). According to Vernonia Interim Police Chief Mike Conner the PPDS system allows the sharing of data between regional departments who are part of the system and creates a place for the VPD to store data in case of a system failure.

Council Hears Presentation from School District—Washington Grade School Principal Aaron Miller presented Council with several ideas for opportunities for the School District to partner with the City as part of the new Natural Resources curriculum the schools are developing. Miller outlined several pos-

sible ways students could work on projects on city owned property as part of hands-on learning programs. Miller was directed by Council to work with City Administrator Bill Haack to develop any proposed activity.

Ridge Riders Explain Arena Improvements—George Bellingham, representing the Vernonia Ridge Riders, updated Council on several improvements the group is making at the horse arena area that the group leases from the City. Bellingham specifically wanted to explain the need for signage at the entrance to the area that restricts unauthorized vehicles. Mayor Josette Mitchell reminded Bellingham that the area is in the Flood Zone and any improvements must be approved by the City Planning Commission.

Council Approves Name Change on Liquor License—Council approved the name change on the Liquor License at 490 Bridge Street to "Bridge Street Mini Mart LLC."

Blue Heron Hollow Receives \$200,000 Grant

With the help of a generous grant from the Meyer Memorial Trust, the Blue Heron Hollow (BHH) apartment complex in Vernonia is one step closer to being elevated above the flood plain. Community Action Team (CAT) recently announced that they were awarded a \$200,000 grant from the Meyer Memorial Trust. The funds will be combined with awards already received from Oregon Emergency Management, Oregon Housing and Community Services, insurance proceeds and CATs own resources to pay for the cost to elevate the 6-building apartment complex above the flood plain.

The 26-unit BHH apartment complex was flooded to a depth of approximately 14 inches when the Nehalem River and Rock Creek overflowed their banks in December 2007. All six buildings were substantially damaged in one of the worst storms in Vernonia's history. Although the damage caused by the flood was repaired and

the residents returned to their homes in April 2008, the buildings are now in Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMAs) 2008 revised flood plain. As a result, the buildings must be either elevated above or removed from the flood plain. "This grant fills the final funding gap for the elevation project," said CAT Executive Director, Jim Tierney. "It insures that Blue Heron Hollow will continue to provide much needed affordable housing to the residents of Vernonia. We thank Meyer Memorial Trust for their generosity and continued investment in helping Vernonia recover from devastation caused by the flood."

CAT is reviewing bids from elevation contractors now. They are uncertain whether the proposal review and contract negotiations process will be completed before Office of Emergency Management declares the end of the construction season for this year. If so, elevation of two of the six

buildings will begin before November 1st. If not, elevation of all buildings will begin in the spring of next year.



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