

Take Control of Your Water Bill

By Nick Galaday

I know how to reduce my electric bill to gain control of my monthly expenses; just use less electricity! I can buy CFL light bulbs, set my thermostat lower, or put a thermal wrap on my hot water tank. I also know how to use less water; buy low-flow toilets and appliances, take 'Navy showers', install drought resistant landscaping, etc. Unfortunately, here in Vernonia, conserving water doesn't result in a lower water or sewer bill. We who live within the city limits have no way to reduce our water/sewer bill below \$102. I'm heartened by the recent discussions taking place within our Public Works Department which include possible changes to our rate structure that might encourage conservation and finally give us ratepayers

some control over our utility expenses. This comes in the nick of time as our water, and especially sewer costs, are going up significantly and soon!

I would like to see my water/sewer bill reflect my actual water usage so I could save money by saving water. I can understand the need to have a portion of my bill be a fixed minimum base charge to cover certain fixed costs. However, I would like to see this fixed portion of our bills be kept as small as possible. Here's what I suggest: The fixed portion of our water/sewer bills should be only enough to cover the monthly per/capita clerical costs of administering our individual account; e.g., meter reading and billing expenses. Beyond those fixed administrative costs, all other costs for the City's operation of our water and sewer services should be

charged for on a per gallon basis. Use more, pay more. Currently we're charged for 2,000 gallons of water every month whether we use it or not. And our sewer bill is fixed, regardless of how much we impact the actual cost to the city for providing our individual sewer service. That's not only frustrating in that we have no control over our bill, but it's unjust. Those who use water responsibly and try to conserve, are subsidizing those wasteful souls who have no incentive but to excessively wash their cars, irrigate the street when they water their lawns, take endless showers, or not be bothered to fix a leaking pipe or faucet, or a toilet that runs on.

So in the name of giving us ratepayers some control over our expenses, providing a more just rate structure, and encouraging conservation, I wish to

implore the city to start charging for both water and sewer on the basis of consumption, gallons per month, starting with the first gallon, with only a very minimal fixed account maintenance fee. Pretty simple, pretty fair.

If you agree, pass this on to your city council person of choice, or mail it to the Vernonia Public Works Department, 1001 Bridge Street, Vernonia, Oregon 97064. Your input can help influence the discussion.

For ideas about how you can conserve water (and money) go to: <http://conserveh2o.org/>

For more information about our Vernonia water system, or to schedule a tour of our plant, contact Jeff Burch at (503) 429-6921.

Nicholas Galaday, is a former Resource Efficiency Manager at Microsoft World Campus, Redmond, WA.

VERNONIA'S
voice
reflecting the spirit of our community

Publisher and Managing Editor
Scott Laird
503-367-0098
scott@vernoniasvoice.com

Contributors
Lynn Berry
Mackenzie Carr
Gayle Rich-Boxman
Nick Galaday
Victoria Guerrero
Wolfgang Rotbart
Sonia Spackman
Burt Tschache

Photography
Scott Laird
Gayle Rich-Boxman

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Donations Needed to Help Fill Christmas Food Boxes

Vernonia Cares Food Bank (VCFB) plans to offer Christmas holiday food boxes to low income households within the Vernonia community. Registration opened November 1 and the application deadline is December 8, 2010.

The boxes will be disbursed December 20, as registered households pick them up from Vernonia Cares Food Bank. The holiday food box will contain the basic groceries for a Christmas meal. "Our target group is the households who fall within the USDA eligibility guidelines," said Vernonia Cares Director Sandy Welch. "That is \$1,679 gross income per month for single person households, plus \$589 per month for each additional person in the household. However, anyone who is a Vernonia resident and does not have the groceries for a Christmas meal is eligible to apply for this special food box," she concludes.

Applications may be obtained from Vernonia Cares Food Bank, which is open Tuesday and Thursday from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM. It is located in the American Legion Hall at 627 Adams Avenue. To obtain a form by phone, call VCFB at 503-429-1414, leaving clear

mailing information. All applications must be received by Vernonia Cares by December 8. Only pre-registered households will be served.

"At this point, we are planning to provide this service to 200 families and are praying the food and funds arrive to support it," Welch emphasized. "We've had great support for the holiday food boxes from our community in the past and I'm looking to that same support again this year. I'm so glad we are able to brighten people's Christmas through these groceries. What's Christmas without, at the least, a Christmas meal together?" asks Welch

"Between now and Thanksgiving is a great time to buy a turkey and donate it towards the Christmas Box Project. That's when the sale prices are available," says Vernonia Cares President Rosie McCoy. "All turkeys will be stored frozen and then distributed near Christmas."

Vernonia Sentry, a strong supporter of VCFB, makes it simple to donate. Through their check-stand giving, patrons can designate \$30 which will be used to buy the groceries and a turkey. Check-stand giving begins on November 13, 2011.

Individuals and businesses interested in supporting this worthwhile cause, whether through food or funds, may contribute directly on Tuesday or Thursday from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM at VCFB. Checks may also be mailed to Vernonia Cares Food Bank, PO Box 126, Vernonia, OR 97064. Receipts for your tax deductible donation will be sent upon request.



Join us to help
Margaret "Peggy" Cone
celebrate her 90th Birthday!

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Sat, 11/19 "Lock Stock & Barrel" Outlaw Country \$3/\$5 cover

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