

Vernonia City News...

At the January 23, 2012 City Council Meeting:

Council Holds Study Session on Personnel Policies Handbook— Council held a Study Session with City Attorney Alex Sosnkowski to review proposed changes to the City's Personnel Policies Handbook. Council will be presented with a final version of the Handbook for adoption at an upcoming Council meeting.

School District Makes Fundraising Presentation—Vernonia School Superintendent Ken Cox briefly updated Council on current fundraising efforts. Pam Weller, representing Wauna Federal Credit Union presented a check for \$6,000 that her organization raised in support of the new school. Weller noted that much of those funds came directly from Wauna employees. Gordon Smith told Council that the \$10,000 Business Match Challenge that he organized and funded has been met and that the school received all \$20,000. Smith thanked numerous businesses making donations and meeting his challenge.

Westlake Receives Certificate of Appreciation—Mayor Josette Michell



(pictured above left) presented a Certificate of Appreciation to Ginger Westlake, City Utility Specialist/Receptionist for her outstanding work to recover past due utility accounts for the city.

Guyett Appointed to Budget Committee—Mayor Josette Mitchell, with consent from Council, appointed George Guyette to serve on the City Budget Committee.

At the February 6, 2012 City Council Meeting:

Council Hears Update on Flood Recovery—Council heard a presentation from Dan Brown, representing Columbia County Flood Recovery. Brown updated Council about several areas of

flood recovery including: how homes in Vernonia were found to be Substantially Damaged—a key component in receiving Federal Assistance for buyouts and demolitions or the lifting of damaged homes; a progress report on mitigation efforts and the City's obligation to perform Flood Plain Enforcement. Council and Brown discussed homes in the community that have not been brought into Federal compliance and the need to speed up the process, as being in non-compliance will effect Flood Insurance rates for the entire community.

Tice Appointed to Budget Committee—Mayor Josette Michell, with the consent of Council, appointed George Tice to serve another term on the City Budget Committee.

Council Approves Cemetery Inscription Application—Council approved a new procedure for anyone wishing to have a name inscribed on the Avenue of Flags at the Vernonia Memorial Cemetery. Cost is \$125 and a flag may be purchased for \$48.

Council Discusses City Committee Ordinance—Council held a lengthy discussion of over an hour about a proposed

new ordinance which would organize all City Committees in a similar manner and give them all similar general powers and duties. The new ordinance would establish standard rules for membership, organization, reporting, meetings, communication and code of conduct for committees. No action was taken, but a final version of the Ordinance is expected to be presented at a special February 13 City Council meeting.

Council Declares Police Property as Surplus—Council passed Resolution 3-12, declaring two ICOP Video systems as surplus and authorizing the sale of this property. VPD Chief Mike Conner informed Council that he is currently testing a newer and less expensive replacement unit.

Council Approves Intra-fund Transfer—Council approved Resolution 4-12 for a transfer of funds from Contingency to Personal Services in three funds: General Fund--\$16,803; Water Fund--\$10,629; and Sewer Fund--\$11,729. The transfers were necessary to cover costs for Insurance Benefits that were incorrectly figured during the preparation of the 2011-12 Budget.

City of Vernonia Hosts Emergency Preparedness Town Hall

On January 28, 2012 City of Vernonia and Columbia County leaders gathered with local citizens at the Vernonia school cafeteria for a Town Hall meeting to discuss Emergency Preparedness and Vernonia's ability to respond to natural disasters.

The meeting, titled "Storm Watch 2012, Preparedness," was hosted by the City of Vernonia and organized by Vernonia City Administrator Bill Haack in direct response to the recent area

snowstorm and power outage in mid-January.

Marc Farmer, General Manager at West Oregon Electric Cooperative discussed the process WOEC uses to reinstate power after a major outage and the specifics of this particular storm situation, including the fact that BPA, who supplies WOEC with power, had a downed line and was unable to repair that immediately. Farmer also described the difficulty WOEC faces in

dealing with large amounts of snow in a largely rural service area and the need to bring in expensive outside crews to assist. Farmer also discussed that the new WOEC headquarters was built with the ability to serve as an emergency shelter in the event of a major emergency, but will not act as a warming shelter during smaller events.

Vernonia Mayor Josette Mitchell described the process the City goes through to officially declare an emergency. Mitchell explained that in the event of an unusual weather situation that looks like it will impact citizens, City Council gathers to consult with Police, Emergency Responders and the City Administrator about the severity of the situation. If needed, Council then gathers in an emergency meeting and declares the emergency by Resolution, which notifies the County and State and marks a place in time in case the City expends extra resources and wants to request funding assistance for those extra expenditures.

Peter Tassoni, Director of Columbia County Emergency Management Department explained that when the City declares an emergency it allows

governmental agencies to speed up the process to procure needed resources and cut through "red tape." It is also a clear indication that the City's resources for dealing with the situation may be overtaxed and that additional help is required. A declaration of an emergency notifies the County that they need to be monitoring the situation and may need to mobilize resources.

Vernonia Police Chief Mike Conner and Vernonia Rural Fire Deputy Chief Dean Smith discussed the role of a City Emergency Operations Center. Conner explained that in a situation when it is unknown how long power will be out, the City will contact Red Cross and request assistance in opening Emergency Warming Shelters. St. Mary's Church and Lincoln Grade school have been designated as shelters in the case of flooding. Conner discussed that there was difficulty in informing citizens and that citizens are always welcome to call the Vernonia Police Department non-emergency phone line where they can receive updated information and leave a recorded message. That number is 503-

continued on page 7

Upcoming Vernonia City Hall Closures and City Council Meetings

City Hall will be closed:

February 20, 2012 President's Day

Upcoming City Council Meetings are scheduled for:

Tuesday February 21, 2012

Monday March 5, 2012

Monday March 19, 2012

Dates and Times subject to change due to conflicts of schedules

**NEED
BODY
WORK?**

**TIME TO CALL
MEYER'S
AUTO BODY**

Meyer's Auto Body 493 Bridge Street, Vernonia. 503-429-0248

THIS WINTER IF YOU NEED LOCAL TOWING SERVICE IN THE VERNONIA AREA

Make sure you request service from a local provider!

Police and County personnel are required to use a rotation of available providers, **UNLESS YOU SPECIFICALLY ASK** for a service by name.

For towing emergencies this winter in and around the Vernonia area

REQUEST TOWING SERVICE FROM

R & R
Motor Company

Annoying the Upper Nahalem Valley since 1982
(503) 429-9797