

An Opinion: The Power of Listening *continued from page 3*

I understand that it is hard for people to stay informed and up to date on current projects. I know everyone doesn't have time to attend meetings, read minutes or serve on a city committee because of commitments to family and work.

The City has made a commitment to try to be more proactive in getting information to the public, but it takes two for communication to work. The citizens need to take the time to read and listen to the information being provided and give feedback.

Which brings me to my final point-this is a community that obviously cares. That was shown to me in the passion expressed by the writers in that recent conversation on the Vernonia Community Bulletin Board. People were frustrated; others wrote long explanations trying to help the group understand the issues. There seems to be a willingness to listen to other points of view, express personal concerns and in the end try to come together to find solutions

I am not sure if there is a good outcome to the wastewater issue and the cost of that problem. The City is getting ready to begin their annual budget process and, like many of us, they do not have any extra resources. The City Budget is similar to yours and my household budgets, only on a larger scale. They have limited income that comes in, and expenses that go out.

Like many of us, the City has already tightened its belt and cut the fat in many areas of expenses. I'm not sure how much more there is to be cut.

So what can a citizen do who feels powerless about increasing utility rates? Well, there may be more than you think.

Stay informed. Read the information the City provides you in your utility bill and in the newspaper. Go to the City website and read the minutes from important meetings. Talk to your City Councilors and your neighbors about the issues that concern you. Follow and join conversations on Facebook that relate to those issues. Knowledge is powerful.

Learn about the process. Governmental operation is complex and complicated. There are rules about the way the City works that need to be followed. If you understand the processes you will feel more empowered. Don't be afraid to ask questions and don't be afraid to ask for more information. You may not always like the answers you receive, but at least you will know what is happening.

If you are really concerned about something, speak up. Your elected officials need to hear from you if you disagree (or agree) with their direction. Send a Letter to the Editor. Go to City Council and speak during Topics From the Floor-that opportunity is early

in the agenda and you don't have to stay for the entire meeting for your chance to address your elected officials. If you can't attend a meeting, send your comments ahead of time and ask that they be read into the record. Band together with others who have similar concerns and send a representative who is able to attend. If you do attend, report what happened so others can also be informed.

Join a committee. Several city committees have openings right now. This is a great opportunity for citizens to influence what is happening. At least one spot on the Planning Commission was recently filled because someone who was part of the conversation on Facebook was encouraged and got involved.

Run for elected office. Our mayor and two City Councilors ran unopposed in the last election. If you are unhappy with the way our city is being run than step up and do something about it.

We now have so many ways to communicate with each other, which gives us an opportunity to share our views, provide each other with more information so we can stay informed and work together to try to find solutions to our issues. We are not powerless if we are willing to get involved and listen to each other.

NOTICE OF ELECTION OF DISTRICT BOARD MEMBERS

Notice is hereby given that on Tuesday, May 21, 2013, an election will be conducted by mail for the purpose of electing board members to the following districts (positions/zones and terms) as follows:

VERNONIA SCHOOL DISTRICT 47J

Positions 1, 4, 5 and 6 (4 year term) - Vernonia 1-3, Vernonia 4, Vernonia 5, South Mist, North Mist and portion of Washington County

MIST-BIRKENFELD RFPD

Positions 2 (2 year term) 3, 4 & 5 (4 year terms) - South Mist, North Mist, portion of Vernonia 5 and portion of Clatsop County

VERNONIA RFPD

Position 1 and 5 (4 year terms) - Vernonia 1-3, portions of Vernonia 4 and Vernonia 5

COLUMBIA 9-1-1 COMMUNICATIONS DISTRICT

- Candidates must live in, be nominated and elected by zone

Zone 2 (2 year term) - Goble,

Rainier 1, Rainier 2, West Rainier, East Rainier, Yankton, South Deer Island, North Deer Island, Prescott, Columbia City

Zone 3 (4 year term) - South Milton, North Milton, St. Helens 1-9, South St. Helens

Zone 5 (4 year term) - Scappoose 1-4, South Scappoose, Canyon, East Scappoose, West Scappoose, Sauvie Island

Each candidate for an office listed above must file a declaration of candidacy accompanied by a filing fee of \$10.00 or a petition for nomination signed by at least 25 registered voters residing in the election district for the office, with the Elections Department of Columbia County beginning on February 9, 2013 and no later than 5:00 p.m. on March 21, 2013.

Filing forms are available on-line at the Secretary of State, Elections Division <http://www.sos.state.or.us/elections/publications/district.html>. The forms are also available at Columbia County Elections Dept., 230 Strand St., St. Helens, OR.

CAT Offers Veterans Services

Community Action Team will be hosting an interim Veteran's Service Officer at the Family Resource Center (125 N. 17th Street, St. Helens) for the next few months. Katie Pereault will see clients from 5:00-7:00 PM on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday; and 8:30 AM -4:00 PM on Saturday.

Ms. Pereault has been a Veterans Service Officer since 2003. She worked in Columbia County until 2005 when she was transferred to Washington County, and later to Multnomah County

in 2007 where she currently serves. Ms. Pereault has six and a half years of honorable service with the United States Army. She served with the 82nd Airborne Division in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, as well as Fort Richardson, Alaska.

To schedule an appointment please call Community Action Team at (503) 397-3511 ext. 275 or contact Katie directly at (503) 366-6580. You may also e-mail her at katiep@cat-team.org.

IT'S TAX TIME Call your LOCAL tax preparer


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