

The Sounding Board: Annual Audit

By Jack Phillips

Another West Oregon Electric Cooperative procedural “Annual Audit.” Each year, an audit is conducted which assures us round pegs go in round holes and square pegs in square holes. These audits are not critically analytical. They reveal little else, other than, each year, income and expenses are accounted for by proper, acceptable accounting procedures.

In today’s world of business, it is a kind of annual blessing. Of course, proper accounting procedures are followed! What a procedural audit does not do, is go into the nitty gritty of business decisions, allocations, assignments, contract awards, travel and the “why?” of how funds are spent. That is not within the cost or scope, of a procedural audit. An Administrative Audit does that, an entirely different kind of process, and just as necessary, in given instances, as the procedural audit we are discussing.

Before I go further, I want to comment on the audit just conducted. It was done by the firm of Kenneth Kuhns & Company of Salem. The Company was one of three firms considered by the Board after last year’s Annual Membership Meeting. I was present at the Board meeting when the decision was made and voted on. At that time, Mr. VanNatta revealed his daughter was a CPA at that firm and he made a statement, for everyone to hear, as a joke, that he did not care if anyone objected to the fact presented, Kenneth Kuhns & Company was the company to be chosen and that was that! It was a careless remark. Yes, there was laughter, especially by Mr. VanNatta. He did not recuse his Chairmanship for the vote. More importantly, his joke created a cloud of disregard and arrogance. Mr. VanNatta has been at WOEC for over 20 years and is Chairman of the Board. His remark was not appropriate, or fair, to WOEC members, other members of the Board, management or Kenneth Kuhns

& Company. It definitely taints the audit just conducted. Membership action and leadership needs to be taken.

By law, co-op members have the right of access to WOEC’s records. Transparency should be a matter of fact. To date, that has not been our experience. We need, therefore, to inspect the records. This includes attorneys, CPA’s and advisors representing us. If we discover improvements can be made and costs effectively lowered, good. If we discover electrical rates are going to remain high, then we should take further action and seriously consider restructuring or dissolving WOEC.

I know the mantra presented by management, “nobody wants us.” However, if rates go through the roof and WOEC goes under, there may be no other choice. PGE is less expensive. Columbia River PUD is less expensive. Every bordering utility is less expensive. For example, members in Chapman have to pay our rates when just a few hundred feet away, Columbia River PUD lines

on the other side of an administrative / political boundary are much lower. Every utility surrounding our territory, charges less. How do they do that? They have long right-of-ways, trees, storms, outages, rising costs and past maintenance problems too.

And that brings to mind another, possible challenge: the City of Vernonia can withdraw from WOEC and form its own Municipal Utility. What happens if they do? We need to take action ahead of potential crisis. As a membership group, we are seeking individuals to join us, or wanting our endorsement in order to become Directors on the WOEC Board. This will take time, effort and money, so we will be having bake sales, garage sales, and the like. Located way out? We will travel. We encourage anyone interested, to contact us. Jack Phillips 503 429-8089 jphillips5295@gmail.com; Sally Harrison 503 429-8425; Nick Galaday 503 429-8910; Our Blog: utilitymembershippowerof1.blogspot.com

Bridge Street Bits

HOME AND GARDEN SALE is coming to the Vernonia Senior Center on May 31st and June 1st, 9 am - 5 pm. This year there will be antique furniture and other furniture as well. Garden art, herbs, veggie plants, flowering plants and Rosy’s homemade cookies. For information to reserve a spot to sell your home and/or garden wares, please contact President Jack Harvey at 503-0528-4904 or stop in at the center. This is a fundraiser for the Vernonia Senior Center. Join in the fun... buying, selling, or both!

MEDICARE QUESTIONS will be answered by Michelle Moore here at the center on Wednesday, April 24th from 9 am - 1 pm. On the docket is information about help with co-pays for hospital stays and deductibles, life insurance questions and health reform changes that take effect January 1, 2014.

SUPERIOR FOOT CARE, LLC by Marilyn Albro, RN is a service we provide here that you will be glad you took advantage of. Call Marilyn at 503-429-0406 for an appointment and fees. Your feet will love you for it!

UTILITY COSTS seem to be rising on a regular basis. There are a few things you can do and a few places to get some help. Community Action Team does have a limited water fund available that can help with half of your water bill, up to \$100. Call to find out if you qualify. Melissa Stewart at Energy Assistance 503-366-6599 or Karen, local Vernonia, 503-429-0273. This is for seniors and non-seniors alike.

In the meantime: 1) Use low-flow shower heads. Community Action Team has some available for free to anyone who needs one. 2) Water heaters should be set no higher than

120 degrees; dishwashers set to 140 degrees unless you don’t have a booster heater in your dishwasher. 3) Use the correct size water heater or switch to a tank-less water heater. This can save you 10-15% on your electric bill.

ICE CREAM will be served here Wednesday, April 24th compliments of Wauna FCU. Hope to see you for lunch. Monday, April 29th join us for a FREE ride to a local senior center for the 5 Area Luncheon. This is a great opportunity to meet and enjoy a meal with other seniors from our four other centers, Clatskanie, Rainier, St. Helens and Scappoose.

SEE YOU HERE for lunch each day, no age limit and for our reinstated breakfast on Fridays 7:30 - 9:00 am.

SENIOR SIGN OFF: Old timers well remember when a family that couldn’t afford to buy a car... didn’t.

Vernonia Senior Center 446 Bridge Street

Have a boat to sell?
Planning a Garage Sale?
Do you have a service to offer?
A job opening?

Advertise in Vernonia’s Voice classified ad section. For only \$5 a month get your ad in the hands of thousands of readers twice a month!
phone: 503-367-0098
email: ads@vernoniasvoice.com

The Constitution Party

The Constitution Party of Columbia County meets on the 3rd Monday each month at 7:00 PM at the Columbia River PUD, 64001 Columbia River Hwy., Deer Island, OR. Current political updates and more.

Vernonia’s Voice is published twice each month on the 1st and 3rd Thursday. Our next issue will be May 2.

Church Directory (in alphabetical order)

Assembly of God
Sunday School: 9:45 AM
Morning Worship: 11:00 AM
Sunday Evening Prayer: 6:00 PM
Wayne Marr, Pastor
662 Jefferson Avenue
503-429-0373
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints
Sunday Schedule:
Sacrament Meeting: 10:00 AM
Sunday School & Primary: 11:20 AM
Relief Society, Priesthood and Young Women: 12:10 PM
Marc Farmer, Branch President
1350 E. Knott Street
503-429-7151
Covenant Church Vernonia
Sunday School: 9:45 AM
Worship Service: 11:00 AM

Wednesday Prayer Meeting: 7:00 PM
John D, Murray, Pastor
359 “A” Street
503-860-3860
Nehalem Valley Bible Church
Sunday School: 9:45 AM
Worship Service: 10:45 AM
Wed. Ladies Bible Study: 10:00 AM
Wednesday Service: 7:00 PM
Sat. Men’s Prayer Meeting: 6:30 AM
Gary Taylor, Pastor
Grant & North Streets
503-429-5378
Pioneer Baptist Fellowship
Sunday School: 9:30 AM
Worship Service: 11:00 AM
www.pbfalive.com
John Cahill, Pastor
939 Bridge Street

503-429-1161
St. Mary’s Catholic Church
Wednesday Religious Education: 3:15-4:30 PM
Sunday Mass: 12:00 PM
Rev. Luan Tran, Administrator
960 Missouri Avenue
503-429-8841
Vernonia Christian Church
Sunday School: 9:45 AM
Worship Service in Youth & Family Center: 11:00 AM
www.VernoniaChristianChurch.org
Sam Hough, Pastor
410 North Street
503-429-6522
Grace Family Fellowship
Sunday School: 9:00 AM
Worship Service: 10:30 AM

Wednesday Prayer: 6:15 PM
Greg Justice, Interim Pastor
957 State Avenue
503-429-6790
Vernonia Foursquare Church
Sunday Worship Service: 10:30 AM
Children’s Sunday School
Carl Pense, Pastor
850 Madison Avenue
503-429-1103
Vernonia Seventh-day Adventist Church
Sabbath (Saturday) Services
Sabbath School: 9:30 AM
Worship Service: 11:00 AM
www.VernoniaSDAC.org
Larry Gibson, Pastor
2nd Ave. and Nehalem St.
503-429-8301