

Vernonia City News...

At the April 15, 2013 City Council Meeting:

Council Approves ACU's-Council approved Ordinance 891, amending Title 9 of the City Code, and allowing Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU's) to be developed in areas of the City zoned Residential, General Residential and Low Density Residential.

City To Hold Open Space Hearings-

The City of Vernonia will conduct a series of Public Hearings to develop a plan for long term use of lands acquired through FEMA acquisition projects in neighborhoods throughout the City. FEMA requires that no insurable improvements be created on these sites but allows the City discretion on community use, including parking, orchards and gardens, parks and other uses to be developed. The meeting will

be held at the VCLC from 10 AM to 12 Noon on Saturday June 8 for properties WEST of Rock Creek; on Saturday June 15 for properties between Rock Creek and the Green Bridge; and on Saturday June 22 for properties EAST of the Nehalem River and the Green Bridge.

Council Approves Name for Wetland-

At the request of the Parks Committee, Council approved the suggested name for the wetlands area at the O-A Mill Site. "Old Mill Marsh" is the name the Vernonia High School Leadership Class presented to the Parks Committee after they held a contest at the school. The Parks Committee and City Council both approved this name.

Citizen Discusses Medical Marijuana-

Resident Ron Buffum spoke during Topics from the Floor and informed Council of his hope to open a Medical

Marijuana Resource Center in Vernonia. Buffum explained that his center would help patients find medical marijuana growers plus provide informational classes and provide supplies. Council took no action.

Council Authorizes Amendment to Parks and Rec Exchange-

Council authorized City Administrator Bill Haack to negotiate an amendment to the land exchange agreement for the property where the Rose Avenue Project is to be developed. The agreement is with Oregon Parks and Recreation Department. Developers of the Rose Avenue Project are proposing to use additional land owned by the State of Oregon which is located south of the property already designated for the project. In exchange for the property the state is asking that Vernonia develop a parking area for horse trailers. Council

authorized Haack to negotiate the exchange, and suggested the parking area be developed near Vernonia Lake.

Council Authorizes Amendment to Contract-

Council authorized an amendment to a contract with Tetra Tech Engineering and Architecture Services for services they provided for final design of the Waste Water Treatment plant.

Council Discusses Transportation District-

Council held a brief discussion about the need for Columbia County to create a Transportation District in order to provide adequate and stable funding for public transportation. Councilor Kim Tierney suggested that Council express support for this idea and was asked to draft letters stating this.

City Administrator Report

By Bill Haack

WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT PROJECT

WWTP PROJECT UPDATE

The City provided information on the WWTP project at the Vernonia School District April 17, 2013 Town Hall meeting. Handouts were available on the elements of the project, the project schedule, and the budget and financing plans now under review.

WWTP COST ESTIMATE

The Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) facility improvements project cost estimate is unchanged, with total project cost established within a \$5.25 to \$6.0 million range. Otak provided the State with an engineer's estimate for the Biosolids removal and Flume Improvement projects of \$800,000 and \$305,000 respectively. This is a minor reduction in the estimate that we used to date (- \$45,000). The new construction hyporheic discharge WWTP facility improvements are estimated at \$4.5 million. There are various other construction management, materials testing, and project administration costs that need to be firmed up.

WWTP FINANCING PLAN

The PWC did not recommend pursuing refinancing the USDA RUS bonds using Wedbush Securities due to their requirement that the funds would need a 1.25 Debt Coverage Ratio and that would require a significant short-term increase in rates to achieve. The City Administrator is now looking at three options for financing the wastewater treatment plant facility improvements: (1) continue to use the existing DEQ loan and expand it by amendment in an amount as needed - term 20 years at 2.93% interest; (2) close the existing DEQ loan after using about \$1.2 million to complete biosolids and flume improvements, and pursue a new DEQ loan for the WWTP new construction project, both loans would be 20 year term, the respective interest rates would be 2.93% and <2.0%; and (3) close the existing DEQ loan after using about \$1.2 million to complete biosolids and flume improvements, and secure a new USDA loan to fund at least the WWTP new construction and refinance the old USDA debt, 40 year term at <2.75%. We will also assess whether the DEQ debt created to date can be refinanced. Options #1 and #2 are the most likely outcomes of our pursuit of additional capital to complete

the WWTP project.

BIOSOLIDS PLAN

City staff completed the Biosolids Sampling protocol on April 3, 2013; and the samples were delivered to a testing lab in Tigard. The testing process requires about 45 days to conduct a review process, and then an additional week to develop a report. Otak is in the process of calculating the volume of biosolids to be removed. Otak is developing a scope of work to use in hiring a firm to dredge and dewater the biosolids.

OTHER PUBLIC WORKS ACTIVITY

SEWER RATE STUDIES

FCS Group is working on a preliminary sewer rate study document to share with the Public Works Committee. FCS Group will attend a joint PWC meeting with Council on 4-23-13.

BROWNFIELD ASSESSMENT GRANT

PBS Engineering and Environmental consultants Heidi Yantz and Jerry Orlando met with PBS on Saturday April 13, 2013 to develop eligibility criteria and to begin the process of site priorities.

PARKS DEPARTMENT

PARK HOSTS

A Park Host transferred from Vernonia Lake to Airport Park. The Park Host at Anderson Park is doing well as park use ramps up.

GENERAL CITY ADMINISTRATION

CEMETARY CARETAKERS HOUSE

The City contacted a local real estate broker to provide a comparison evaluation to establish a market price for the facility. The real estate professional shared that land has lost significant value since the 2008 economic slide. His whole house assessment was that the house had value to a potential seller as a rental or a fixer upper. In our discussion he felt that the property could be sold as is and leave to the investor how that may want to modify the parcel for future development. The City Administrator walked the property and inspected the house and outbuilding - there are significant repairs needed. The City will seek a home inspector to conduct a physical system inventory and establish a repair schedule. The Building Department will not be able to conduct the analysis of the

house.

POTENTIAL BUILDING CONDEMNATION

The City was able to contact the asset manager that represents the owner of the Park Drive vacant house. They sent a contractor out to board up a broken window, but declined to board up the house. We are contacting them again to assess their ability to demolish the deck in the front of the house that is dry rotted and a potential hazard to park users. After discussing condemnation options with our legal team it is clear that this tool is not well suited for our goal at this site.

CDBG GRANT No. 06021 MONITORING VISIT

IFA Project Coordinator Melanie Olson conducted an onsite project monitoring April 11, 2013. She met with the City Finance Administrator, and the CDBG Grant Administrator, Community Action Team. This is a typical part of the pre-closeout grant functions of the CDBG program.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

CITY THANKS YOUTH GROUP

City Information and Updates Available by Email

Citizens who wish to receive meeting information and updates can request to be placed on an email list at City Hall. Please contact Joann Glass at joann@vernonia-or.gov and asked to be placed on the "Citizen Notification List."

FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES

The City Recorder coordinated with Kim Gorman, Director of Children, Youth, & Family Ministries. Christ United Methodist Church to organize a mixed denomination youth groups community services project on April 6-7-8, 2013. You may have seen a few dozen young adults and their leaders working at the Shay Park flower beds, open space lots along Bear Creek, at the Vernonia Historical Museum, and at the city limits. Weeding, trash collection, some pruning and the planting of bulbs. The group stayed at the Vernonia School District campus. The group provided everything. We are very thankful for their support.

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Vernonia City Council Meetings and Closures

City Council Meetings are scheduled for 7 PM:

Monday, May 6
Monday, May 20

City Closures are scheduled for:

Memorial Day
Monday, May 27

Dates and times subject to change due to conflicts of schedules

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