

Vernonia City News...

At the May 6, 2013 City Council Meeting:

Council Hears Presentation From Sheriff-Council heard a presentation from Columbia County Sheriff Jeff Dickerson concerning upcoming cuts to the county budget starting on July 1, 2013 that will impact the Sheriff's Office budget, particularly the operation of the County Jail. Dickerson provided Council with a written report entitled "Jail in Crisis." Dickerson told Council that the jail is a 24 hour, 365 days a year and requires certain levels of service. Dickerson told Council he is unable to run the jail at current levels given the budget he has and intends to reduce the number of local beds available from sixty-five to twenty-five. Dickerson says that means more prisoners being released earlier. Dickerson says if budget cuts continue in future budget years, the jail will likely need to be closed.

Council Hears Presentation on Rose Avenue Project-Council received an update from Sid Scott of Scott Edwards Architecture on the progress of the Rose Avenue Project. Scott is the project manager for the Vernonia Health Center portion of the project. Scott shared with Council the proposed design of the site, which would include the new Health center building, a shared building that would include the Vernonia Senior Center and Vernonia Cares Food Bank and space for future commercial development. Scott told Council that in order for the proposed plan to work, the City would need to vacate a portion of Umattilla Street and receive an exchange of property with the State of Oregon. City Administrator Bill Haack is currently discussing this with the State. Scott said the project still has several details it needs to work out.

Council Discusses Public Transit-Council discussed a letter drafted by Councilor Kim Tierney to be sent from the Council which requested that the Columbia County Commissioners consider the establishment of a local Transportation District in order to develop an efficient and funded transportation system for the County. Council asked Tierney to make some minor adjustments to the letter.

Council also discussed the appointment of one of its members to the County Citizen's Transit Advisory Committee which meets during the week in the day-time. No Councilor is able to attend those meetings when scheduled and Council said they would ask for a citizen volunteer to serve on the committee.

Downtown Parking-Council received a report from consultant Ben Fousek on an inventory of downtown parking spaces and land use inventory he performed on behalf of the City. According to Fousek's report there are a total of 227 parking spaces and 12 non-standard spaces within the Downtown District. There are a total of 134 units including 66 dwelling units. The City is considering a parking fee for all units within the Downtown Zone in order to develop and maintain additional parking. According to City Code the city would implement fees using a complicated method of determining square footage of units, type of usage of the units and number of spaces already available of each unit. Fousek recommended the city implement a flat fee instead. Council will consider the current Code and potential fees during an upcoming workshop.

Council Holds Public Hearing on Wastewater Grant-Council held a Public Hearing on funds the City received through Community Block Grant

(CDBG), Number P06021 from the Oregon Business Development Department. The funds were used by the City to complete the Wastewater System Improvement Final Design Phase II. The City received a total of \$1.2 million dollars. To date the City has contracted and used less than \$371,000; the balance will be returned to CBDG. The purpose of the hearing was to receive public comment on the project and the local government's performance. There was no public testimony. Council took no action following the Hearing.

Council Authorizes Refinancing Negotiations-Council authorized City Administrator Bill Haack to negotiate options to refinance debt associated with the Wastewater Treatment Project. The City of Vernonia will have a sewer utility debt of approximately \$10 million dollars at the completion of the project. This debt includes two USDA loans and one DEQ loan. Haack is proposing refinancing part or all of the debt under one USDA loan with a lower rate, but extending the term of the loan. Haack estimates savings to the City of over \$200,000 per year. Following the City Council meeting Haack notified Council that he would provide them with four repayment options for their consideration.

Conner Informs Council of Narcotics Enforcement Reduction-Vernonia Police Chief Mike Conner informed Council

that due to budget cuts at the County level, the Columbia Enforcement Narcotics Team (CENT) will be losing one of its two detectives. CENT has led local efforts to disrupt major drug trafficking and distribution. It has been staffed by officers from the St. Helens and Columbia County Sheriff's Departments. The Sheriff's Department has given notice that they will withdraw their assigned officer starting July 1st.

Council Discusses Ridge Riders-Staff informed Council that the Vernonia Ridge Riders had verbally indicated that they are no longer pursuing legal action with regards to their lease for use of City owned property at Anderson Park. Staff informed Council that the Ridge Riders provided them with a schedule of upcoming events they intend to hold. Council was in agreement that the Ridge Riders and the City still do not have a current lease agreement. Council asked staff to contact the Ridge Riders and inform them that they have no agreement for use of the facility. Council scheduled a Workshop to discuss the matter.

City to Change Financial Institutions-City Finance Officer Angie Handegard informed Council in a memo that she intends to switch the institution where the City does its banking from US Bank to Wauna Federal Credit Union in order to eliminate monthly service fees currently being charged.

City Administrator Report

By Bill Haack

WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT PROJECT

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. (There is more discussion below on the Flume project). 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 City Administrator met with USDA Rural Utility Services to discuss their Wastewater Loan and Grant programs. If eligible I will develop an agenda item for the 5-6-13 City Council meeting that directs staff to pursue USDA funding. (However, DEQ financing is still planned for the Flume Improvement Project and the Biosolids Removal Project.)

WWTP ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The City of Vernonia along with development team members from Otak, Tetra Tech, Pacific Habitat Services and Shannon and Wilson, continue to work to provide NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) with temperature and ammonia modeling for the hyporheic discharge design now under DEQ review.

BIOSOLIDS PLAN

The City awaits the results of biosolids sam-

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VERNONIA LIONS CLUB PRESENTS

Free Health Screenings

JUNE 1ST • 9AM-4PM
PROVIDENCE CLINIC PARKING LOT
510 BRIDGE ST., VERONIA



DON'T MISS THIS OPPORTUNITY TO CHECK YOUR HEALTH

This event includes the following free screenings:

- Vision
- Glaucoma
- Blood Pressure
- Hearing
- Diabetes

(With 3 hour fast)

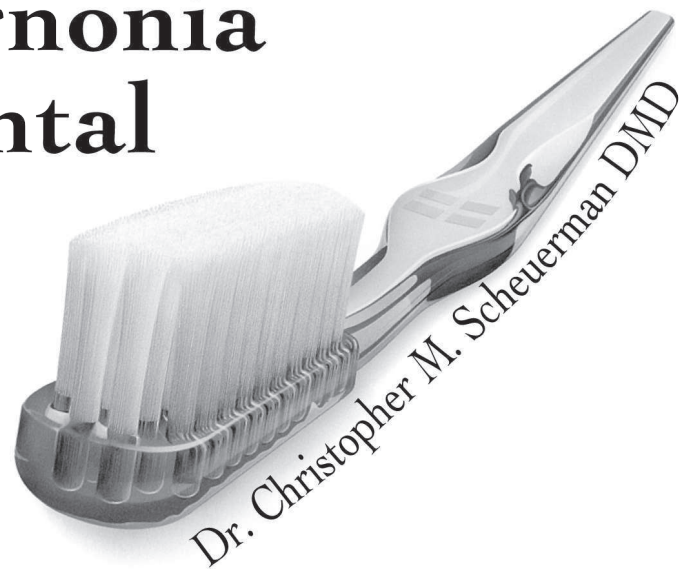
The Oregon Lions Mobile Health Screenings Program will offer quick, free health screenings. Please note: individuals under 18 can receive vision and hearing screenings only. To participate in additional screenings, a parent or guardian must be present. *Diabetes test requires a 3 hour fast; we do not test pregnant women for diabetes. No appointment necessary.



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