

## Town Hall Held to Discuss Impending Jail Closure *continued from page 4*

the facility and to court, and the cost of renting the beds, which he estimated is \$65 per night, per bed. Fisher added that it will be the same amount from the General Fund as is currently being expended. "This is not a cost savings to the County," said Fisher. Moyer also added that closing the jail will provide no extra funds to the Sheriff's Office to hire additional patrol deputies.

Moyer told an audience member that the jail is not able to use volunteers to run the facility. Moyer said the state requires that prison positions be staffed by state certified corrections deputies. Moyer noted that jail food service is provided by a contractor who provides one employee to plan menus, order supplies, and supervise preparation; inmates cook the food. Inmates also do their own laundry and clean the jail facility.

An audience member asked if there were closer facilities where Columbia County could house prisoners. Moyer explained that Clatsop and Washington Counties do not have space. Multnomah County charges about \$125 per night to rent a bed. Yamhill County could not guarantee bed space and had a higher rate than Polk County. NORCOR, a regional facility in The Dalles was the same rate and about the same distance as Polk County, but travel to that facility during winter months made that prohibitive. Heimuller noted that the Commissioners have been in negotiations and searching for options for several years because they knew the jail closure was on the horizon.

Hyde returned to the idea that economic development is the key to Columbia County's future. He noted that Columbia County has put tax incentives in place to keep and attract business. He also mentioned Port Westford, the last deep water port on the Lower Colum-

bia River, as an asset. Hyde went on to mention potential expansion at Scappoose Airport and the development of a new industrial park at that site. "Half or more of the time we spend as County Commissioners is spent trying to retain and attract new businesses," said Hyde. "We're in the cat bird seat for the future, we really are. We are the county where people are going to grow to. I'm excited about our future."

Moyer addressed a question about what the daily reality is for local law enforcement when the jail closes. Moyer stated that the jail has held as many as 200 prisoners at one time, which included approximately 100 local inmates. He said that three years ago the jail had to set a local bed limit of sixty-five based upon their funding. This past year they reduced that number again to twenty-five. "Our deputies are already citing and releasing where they used to take people to jail," said Moyer. "Things like theft, if they threw a rock through your window or slashed your tires, drunk driving. A lot of times right now they might get lodged, sometimes they get a ticket."

Moyer explained what would happen with only ten beds available. "Those ten beds are already full with people we already have in custody. We have two people that are awaiting trial for murder. We have two or three others that are in there for attempted murder or rape. Those are the types of people we're going to put in those ten beds."

Moyer said the other fifteen would be let loose right into Columbia County. He went on to explain that when patrol officers arrest somebody, whether it's the city police in Vernonia, St. Helens, Scappoose or Sheriff patrol deputies, they are most likely going to issue a citation and a court date. If it rises to

a higher level they may take them to the Sheriff's office and do a book and release where they take all pertinent information but still release them with a court date. If a prisoner needs to be held decisions will have to be made about which of the other ten can be released. Moyer did say they will have limited funds set aside to rent beds on a nightly basis if needed.

When asked specifically about Domestic Assault arrests, Moyer explained that most are considered a low level crime, classified as Assault 4, and would be given a citation and a court date. Moyer said Drunk Driving arrests were similar.

One of the consequences of this system is that people tend to not show up for their court dates. "We already have a history of this right now because we are doing a lot of cite and release," said Moyer. "The District Attorney told me that 'failure to appear' situations have gone up by a multiple of four. Then we

get warrants. Then we have to re-catch them. It's going to make it harder for us on the patrol side." Fisher added, "This becomes a real demoralizing position for the police to be in."

Moyer shared some statistics. In 2013 the City of Vernonia lodged sixty people in the jail. The Sheriff's Office lodged 250 people. St. Helens lodged 472 last year.

Hyde brought up the point that the County has been supplementing city budgets by not charging them to house prisoners. "That reality is about to hit all the city budgets," said Hyde. "I don't think the cities fully realize this."

Fisher stated that the County Commissioners have pledged to form a citizens committee to monitor the jail budget if the levy were to pass.

Moyer closed the meeting by inviting anyone from the public to visit the jail and take a tour.

## Inductees to VHS Athletic Hall of Fame Announced

The selection committee for the inaugural edition of the Vernonia High School Athletic Hall of Fame met on Thursday March 13<sup>th</sup> and selected the group that will be inducted for this first year. Those that were nominated but did not get selected will be kept on file for further consideration in future years. This is the first year of the Hall of Fame and will be an annual event in the coming years.

The event will take place on Saturday April 19<sup>th</sup> at the Cedar Ridge Complex and is open to the public. The event will start at 6:00 PM with a no host bar and social time. Dinner will be at 6:30 with the induction ceremony

following. Tickets may be purchased at the door for \$15.00.

The first group to be inducted are:

- Gilbert Bergerson, 1928
- John (Gordy) Crowston, 1952
- Leonard Schmidlin, 1962
- Marvin Crowston, 1962
- Steven Hanson, 1970
- Patrick Curl, 1975
- Dean Bernardi, 1978
- Travis Gwin, 2005
- Joreigh Landers, 2007
- The 1976-77 Cross Country Team

We hope to see everyone support this group and be at Cedar Ridge on April 19<sup>th</sup>.



### Schedule as of April 1, 2013

#### Nehalem Valley Fixed Route

Mon, Wed, Fri Leaves Vernonia 6:15am & 4:30pm

#### Dial-a-ride Service Available

Tue & Thr for 5 hours per day 503-366-0159

Please visit the website for fare schedule

<http://www.columbiacountyrider.com>

Please have exact fare ready. Drivers do not give change.

#### Columbia County Rider

General Public

Seniors, Disabled, Students & Children

Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult.

#### FIXED ROUTES RATES (All fares are one way)

|                                          |        |        |
|------------------------------------------|--------|--------|
| Per boarding within a Boarding Zone      | \$5.00 | \$4.00 |
| Per Additional Zone (add) - per boarding | \$1.00 | \$1.00 |

#### MONTHLY PASS RATES - Scheduled Routes Only

|           |          |          |
|-----------|----------|----------|
| 1 Zone    | \$75.00  | \$60.00  |
| 2 Zones   | \$130.00 | \$110.00 |
| All Zones | \$150.00 | \$130.00 |

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Fri: Prime Rib  
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