

## WOEC Holds Annual Meeting

The Vernonia Scout Cabin was filled to capacity once again for the 2014 West Oregon Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting on Saturday, August 16<sup>th</sup>.

Board President Robert Van Natta opened the meeting by introducing the rest of the Board members as well as employees and other special guests in the audience, including State Representative Brad Witt.

Jim Buxton was elected as Board Director for District 3 representing Keasey Road and parts of Vernonia, defeating Sally Harrison. Larry Averitt ran unopposed and was elected as the Director for District 7 representing Manning, Hagg Lake, and Yamhill County.

During his report, Board President Van Natta noted that it has been a year of change for WOEC, with the resignation of General Manager Marc Farmer and assistant Sarah Rossi and the retirement of Operations Director Steve Scott, along with the hiring of Bob Perry, Angela Hadley and Don Rose to fill those spots. Van Natta also noted that three Directors on the Board have left since last year and

thanked David Hess, Dixie London and Marty Van Dyken for their service. Van Natta explained that Averitt, Buxton and Rosemary Lohrke had been appointed as replacements. Van Natta also passed on some bad news, informing the members that Bonneville Power Administration had discovered a broken meter and sent WOEC a bill for \$200,000 for power used that had not been billed during the last two years. Van Natta did share some good news, telling the membership that due to the rate increase last year, the co-op's cash flow problem is under control and that members should not see any rate increases in 2014.

Finance Officer David Western told the members that in 2013 the co-op ended the year with a positive of \$124,934. Western also noted that so far through six months of 2014 the co-op is ahead by \$425,316 and is staying very close to the projected budget for the year. Western said the co-op received a clean audit for 2013. Western also told members that the co-op has instituted Smart Hub, a on-line bill pay option for members and that the co-op is currently switching to electronic time sheets for employees.

Operations Director Don Rose introduced himself to the membership and told them that outages are down significantly because of the tree trimming his crews have done as well as pole replacement and also by undergrounding lines when possible. Rose noted that several trucks in the fleet were replaced this year due to age and high mileage. Rose said he is trying to find ways to improve things as inexpensively as possible.

New General Manager Bob Perry also introduced himself to the members. Perry told the members that WOEC has many challenges including lots of trees, fish mitigation, and green power requirements. Perry said he sees great potential for the co-op and that the co-op has a great and diverse group of directors which is a benefit and thanked them for their service. Perry said the co-op will continue to perform Cost of Service studies to help design rates to cover fixed costs.

Following the meeting the members enjoyed a BBQ lunch provided by Terrel's BBQ.

## Seniors Look for Answers *continued from front page*

primarily designed to assist persons with low and moderate incomes.

The Vernonia Senior Center is required to move from their current location following the 2007 Flood and will receive a buyout from FEMA of approximately \$150,000. Demolition of the old building is expected to cost the Seniors roughly \$50,000, leaving the Senior Board with just \$100,000 toward the project budget. Demolition of the old building must be completed by March 31, 2015. The maximum amount the City can apply for from CDBG is \$2 million.

At the Senior Center Board meeting on August 8, 2014, the Board estimated the price for the new construction to be \$2.1 million. Simultaneously, the Seniors and Food Bank must raise funds to cover street and utility development that are off-site as a separate project. The development team estimates that this project and some of the non-CDBG eligible costs will require \$500,000 to \$700,000 more in charitable support. The current plans for the new building include a full kitchen and dining/social area, multi-purpose space as well as space for the Vernonia Cares Food Bank. Vernonia Cares Director

Sandy Welch, who also serves on the Senior Center Board as Secretary, says Vernonia Cares has been setting aside funds on a monthly basis for several years and that her organization will contribute those funds to the new construction.

Jim Tierney of Community Action Team (CAT) is serving as the Senior Center/Food Bank Project Development Manager. According to Tierney the earliest that construction on the new senior facility could begin would be May of 2015. The Seniors are considering several options for ways to serve their community members in the interim, including using space in a local church facility to serve meals. They are also considering options to house their Thrift Store, the main source of income for the organization.

If the Seniors accept CDBG funds they will be limited in who they can serve for the first five years once the building is operational. The CDBG funds come with age limit and income restrictions which would in turn require the Thrift Store to be housed off-site for the first five to six years.

Project Manager Tierney says the project team will work closely with the architect hired by the City during the

CDBG project to make sure the current project size and scope are warranted. "The final architecture work must be done using an architect hired by the City after the CDBG award. At that time we will have the expert assistance needed to more carefully look at design efficiencies," says Tierney. "Using the design process to look for potential savings is critical to success. It is a commitment we owe to our funders and a hedge against surprises during the public bidding process." Tierney went on to say that squeezing the project scope as much as possible also reduces fundraising demands as well as long term operating costs. Tierney said the project would be making applications to several philanthropic organizations in the near future to fill gaps in the project budget.

At the August 8 Senior Center Board meeting, the Board held a lengthy discussion about their current financial situation. According to financial records the Senior Center is losing money at a rate of over \$1,000 per month. While the Thrift Store has recently increased profits, it remains unable to offset the cost of operating the meals program and the rest of the Center. Later at that same meeting the Board voted to cut meal service from

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five days to three days per week in order to reduce costs. Senior Center Budget Committee member Tobie Finzel says the Seniors are also actively researching other successful senior centers around the region and country looking for other operational models they might try to mirror.

Tierney says he believes the Senior Center Board can find solutions to their cash flow problem and develop a successful operational model. "They know they have a problem and are serious about taking steps to address the issue," said Tierney. "Adjusting their business plan and practices is a job that only the Seniors can do because they are the ones that must carry it out."

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