

## New WOEC Billing Causes Confusion

West Oregon Electric Cooperative (WOEC) recently changed their billing system, combining two previous billing cycles into one. The change has raised some questions among members.

All WOEC bills will now be processed on the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month and will be due on the 25<sup>th</sup>. According to WOEC staff, bills are mailed from a processing plant in St. Louis.

During this past billing cycle, many members did not receive their bills in the mail until Saturday, October 18, giving them just one week to make their payment before being subject to a late fee.

When questioned about the small amount of time customers were being given to make their payment on time, WOEC staff explained that the billing information was sent out electronically in the afternoon on Friday, October 10, meaning bills did not get processed on Saturday, October 11<sup>th</sup>. Processing of these bills was further delayed because of the Columbus Day holiday on Monday, October 13.

WOEC staff made several suggestions to help members deal with the

new billing schedule.

First, members can sign up for Budget Billing, which averages your bills for the past year and allows you to have the same monthly payment every month throughout the year. This makes it easier for customers to plan a budget and always know the amount of their electric bill before their statement arrives. WOEC staff made sure to warn customers not to make their payments before the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month, as that would be counted as an extra payment but would not go towards the next bill being processed that month and due on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

Bills are also available for viewing on line at the WOEC web page. Members can sign up as part of the Smart Hub program and receive an email notification when your bill is ready to be viewed on the 10<sup>th</sup>. Members can also pay their bills on line using a credit card through the Smart Hub program.

Another way to avoid a late payment is to sign up for automatic payments by bank draft before the 25<sup>th</sup> of the month.

## Senator Johnson Wins “Legislator of the Year”

Oregon State Senator Betsy Johnson (D-Scappoose) has been awarded the “Legislator of the Year” award from the Oregon Economic Development Association (OEDA), the state’s leading trade organization for economic development agencies and professionals.

At its annual meeting on October 27, 2014 in Eugene, OEDA President Charlie Mitchell conferred the award to Senator Johnson and thanked her for her dedication to job creation and her focus on economic development.

In his comments to the 150 economic development professionals in attendance, Mitchell remarked, “Senator Johnson represents the best of Oregon. Fiercely independent, and a tireless advocate for jobs and opportunity for Oregonians. There’s really no one else like Senator Johnson. She’s in a class by herself.”

The Oregon Economic Development Association represents over 110 economic development



professionals and agencies throughout the state of Oregon. OEDA’s mission is to advocate for economic development, bring collaboration among economic development agencies to promote Oregon as a place to start or expand a business, and bring best practices and professional development to the state’s

## A Few Helpful Tips Flood season is fast approaching

- **Floodvents** must allow floodwaters to flow freely. Screens, louvers, or other covers that allow flood waters to flow freely into the enclosed area may be placed over the openings to keep out vermin and weather. But solid covers that do not allow flood waters to flow freely are in violation and may affect you and the city from receiving Flood Insurance. Remove solid covers, styrofoam or other materials from vents.

- **Lowest Elevation of Machinery or Equipment** Service equipment for a building that is below the Base Flood Elevation (BFE) has to be elevated or designed to prevent water from entering or accumulating within the components during conditions of flooding. This includes equipment such as, but not limited to, furnaces, hot water heaters, washers, dryers, air conditioners, etc.

- **A Flood Plain Development Permit** is required by the FEMA Code of Federal Regulations for such activities as new construction, reconstruction, rebuilding, placement of manufactured homes, placement of small outbuildings, fences, clearing of trees and other vegetation, placement of driveway culverts or bridges, long term storage of equipment and materials or any man-made change to improved or

unimproved real estate such as dredging, drilling, excavation, filling, grading, logging, mining, or paving. The Flood Plain Development Permit requirement is intended to allow the City of Vernonia to monitor activities located in Flood Plain Management Area. Application for a Flood Plain Development Permit is a SEPARATE process from the building permit application process.

- **If you are not elevated: BUY FLOOD INSURANCE!**

- **Avoid storing these products** in areas likely to flood:

- Fiberglass or Cellulose insulation
- Cork, or corkboard
- Gasoline, motor oil, weed killer, pesticide, lye, drain cleaners
- Linoleum, particle board plywood, chipboard, fiberboard, paperboard, strawboard, masonite paneling
- Wallboard, drywall, gypsum, wallpaper

- **It’s never too early to prepare!**

Prepare a 72 hour Preparedness Kit for your home and car. Visit the Take 5 to Survive website at <http://www.take5tosurvive.com/> for additional information including a step-by-step plan to put your emergency kit together.

## City Approves Zone Change

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Application for the zone change followed a public hearing which was part of the City Council meeting. The hearing included a staff report from City Planner Carole Connell, a report from the applicant’s attorney Ross Day, and public testimony from citizens.

During the public testimony portion of the hearing eight citizens spoke in favor of the zone change, including Mike Pihl, Sally Harrison, Jack Harvey, Sharon Bernal, Bill Langmaid, Don Wallace, Steve Calhoun and Donald Normand. Among reasons given for support of the change were: the interest of making Vernonia a destination; the need for Vernonia to embrace change; preserving the Lincoln School building for its historic value; and the opportunity to create more jobs in the community.

Three citizens testified against the zone change, Jim Tierney, Burdett Robb and Mark Akers. Tierney suggested the City had other ways to change the property designation instead of a change to General Commercial. Burdett, a neighbor of the property, said he would like the neighborhood to stay residential. Akers expressed that he had a personal disagreement with Bud Dow.

Some of the most compelling testimony came from the only person to speak as neutral to the application. Karen Michaels, who lives on State Avenue in Vernonia, said she is a member of the family who is considering purchasing the Lincoln School property. Michaels said she is new to Vernonia and that her family is interested in developing a business that includes a Bed and Breakfast and a bicycle shop on the site. She said her sister is a journeyman carpenter who wants to preserve the building. She said her family is interested in gardening and farming, making cider from fruit, supporting and encouraging eco-

tourism, and bringing culture to Vernonia.

City Planner Connell’s report indicated that the Vernonia Planning Commission had previously recommended denying the application for the zone change to General Commercial. Connell reported that instead the Planning Commission made a recommendation that Council approve a change to a Planned Development PD zone, which must be used in combination with another zone. A Planned Development PD zone allows the consideration of variations in standards based on a specific plan. Ross, the Dow’s attorney, reminded the Council during his report that the hearing was only to consider the request for a change to General Commercial and that Council could not consider the Planning Commission’s recommendation for a Planned Development PD zone.

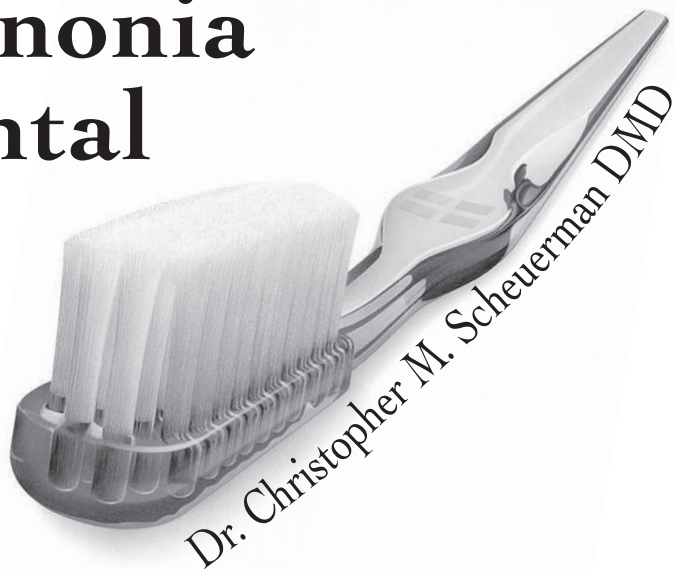
Connell’s report provided findings of fact that mostly agreed with a zone change. The report noted that reuse of the building for lodging and retail could benefit residents and tourists and improve the local economy. The report also stated that the City currently has an estimated .4 acre shortage of commercial land and the increase of 1.14 acres would address this shortage.

Connell’s report did note that if the zone change was applied, that unknown future uses of the property could have a negative impact on the residential character of the surrounding neighborhood.

The Dow’s attorney Day told Council during his report that from the time the Dow’s purchased the property, their intention was to save the building and turn it into a destination/Bed and Breakfast. Day reminded Council that

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## Vernonia Dental



622 Bridge Street Vernonia, OR 97064  
phone (503) 429-0880 -- fax (503) 429-0881