Readers Lend Their Voices...

To the Editor,

We would like to thank everyone who came to Dick's celebration for his 80th Birthday. We hope you all enjoyed the celebration. Thanks again.

Dick and Kathleen Gwin
Vernonia

To the Editor,

A big thank you to all my family and friends who helped celebrate my birthday. Thank you for all the flowers, cards and emails. I fell so loved and I'm so glad Vernonia is our home.

Lulu Lamping
Vernonia

To the Editor,

We would like to personally invite you and/or your group or organization to participate in Make Vernonia Shine Day on April 25th, 2015, from 9 to noon. We would love to see the groups and organizations in Vernonia come together for a great cause - cleaning up our community. This is a great opportunity to make new connections, work together and keep the spirit of helping our neighbors alive in Vernonia. Please contact us before April 25th if you would like to receive an early assignment for your group or organization, or let us know if you have a project of your own. R & S Market is providing hot dogs and soda for all workers.

For additional information, please contact: Donna Webb, (503) 429-5201.

Vernonia Weather February 2015

DATE	HIGH	LOW	PRECIP
1	45	38	.43
2	53	37	.15
3	50	42	.13
4	51	44	.25
5	55	45	1.45
6	55	51	1.15
7	58	42	.75
8	55	42	.47
9	55	45	.23
10	54	38	T
11	55	38	0
12	61	37	0
13	63	36	0
14	57	34	0
15	63	31	0
16	61	27	0
17	63	26	0
18	57	28	0
19	57	38	0
20	54	39	0
21	54	24	0
22	55	23	0
23	58	20	0
24	57	40	T
25	50	40	.05
26	53	43	.40
27	52	30	T
28	54	26	0
Ave/Tot	55.5	35.8	5.46

Weather data is collected at the U.S. Weather station at the Vernonia Water Plant

To the Editor,

A recent article in the Chronicle highlights the miners' position regarding my initiative. Measure 5-243, if approved, would increase the Natrual Resources Depletion fee by 35 cents for road improvements and to maintain CCRider. The miners' comments were calculated to hit several "hot button" issues that they hope will stick with voters and encourage a no vote. I challenge you as the knowledgeable voters you are to seek out the facts. We can expect more of this type of misinformation even though I have asked the miners, Commissioners and our state elected officials, time and again to work with me to find funding for roads and CCRider.

Below are a few facts that voters should be aware of:

1. The depletion fee has not been increased in 18 years. However the price for the product has increased. Many of the buyers of rock products have stated that an increase would not affect their business. Wayne Mayo was quite explicit about that. A previous letter to the editor by Bill Eagle indicated that the amounts passed on to consumers of rock products would be very small.

2. The Depletion Fee Ordinance No. 90-20 defines the purpose of the depletion fee. The Ordinance has been amended many times over the years. It is not a tax, a property tax, or in particular – a sales tax, as stated by Mr. Peterson in the Chronicle article. Measure 5-243 amends the current Depletion Fee Ordinance to include the increase, which means no additional paper work is required by any of the miners.

3. Measure 5-243 specifically states that money raised from this initiative can only be used for road improvements and CCRider. Without passage of 5-243, CCRider will have to reduce service. Seniors will have fewer options for transportation to the doctor, grocery or other things that everyone who has a car takes for granted.

4. One of the provisions in the Natural Resources Depletion fee Ordinance is in Section 3, Definitions, H, "Economic Interest." This section entitles the miners to a tax deduction on the rock they mine. The miners have such a sweet deal in Columbia County they will never leave. But they sure do cry about a small fee increase.

5. While we can easily get caught up in the hype that jobs will be at stake, perhaps voters should look at the facts:

A. Knife River is a subsidiary of a very large, multi-conglomerate, which by all accounts, looking at their stock offering, is certainly a profitable stock for anyone who is wealthy enough to have a stock portfolio. I think all of you know that most publicly traded companies are not really too concerned about jobs, but they are very concerned about keeping their share holders happy. If you would like to know more about Knife River and its parent company, MDU Group, a North Dakota based company, you can just google it. Their Annual Report for 2013 states that their consolidated adjusted earnings for 2013 was $289.9 million.

Cal Portland is a diversified building materials and construction solutions provider to the western United States and Canada. Corporate offices are in Glendora, California.

When you look at the big picture, none of the big companies mentioned in the Chronicle article are locally owned. They make a lot of money off of their holdings for people who do not live in or care about Columbia County. Adding a meager 35 cent increase to the depletion fee will not kill their bottom line, drive their stock holders away, affect jobs, or hurt their competitiveness.

B. The miners have submitted requests to increase their hours for round-the-clock operations now that the construction season is kicking in. The economy has improved. Round-the-clock operations will not decrease the number of jobs in this industry, it will increase the need for more workers.

6. The miners will not lose business. I have talked to several companies who use and purchase rock products and some who actually haul rock and they have told me that these arguments are simply not true.

7. Whether the rock is transported by truck, which a large portion is, or shipped out by barge, the facts are the same. The impacts, in addition to the roads, is that the resource is being depleted. When the rock is gone, it's gone. Because of the lack of local match funding, CCRider will have to further reduce service.

I have said that I want to work with the miners for the benefit of the people they say they employ and their families, seniors, students and anyone who uses the roads and needs CCRider.

In the end, the big issue is increasing the depletion fee to provide funding for road improvements and to maintain CCRider which benefits everyone in our county, not just a few. Again, I state that I would stop working to get voter approval on Measure 5-243 if the miners, Commissioners and our state elected officials would come up with stable funding for roads and CCRider. Again, it is not happening. So I will continue to work to get this measure approved.

Thelma Bonar
Chief Petitioner Measure 5-243

HOW TO SEND LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Vernonia's Voice welcomes and requests your thoughts, opinions and ideas. Please include your name, address and phone number, limit your letters to 300 words or less. *Vernonia's Voice* reserves the right to edit, omit, respond or ask for a response to letters submitted. We will print letters space permitting. Deadline is the 1st and 3rd Monday of each month. Email: scott@vernoniasvoice.com or mail to: Letters, PO Box 55, Vernonia, OR 97064.

Need Help?

Call for meeting times and locations

Columbia Community Mental Health
Call 503-397-5211 -or- 1-800-294-5211
For after hours Crisis call: 1-866-866-1426
http://www.ccmh1.com/crisis.html

Narcotics Anonymous NW Region 503-345-9839
http://portlandna.com/

Alcohol Anonymous NW Region 503-366-0667
http://www.pdxaa.com/

Upcoming Events

Upper Nehalem Watershed Council Meeting - Thursday, March 19, 6:30 PM at 1201 Texas Ave.

VHS Alumni Basketball Game - Friday, March 20th, 6:00 PM. Burger feed and bake sale. No admission, donations accepted.

Easter Egg Hunt - Saturday, April 4, 10:00 sharp at Hawkins Park. This free event is sponsored by Vernonia PTA.

Vernonia Sportsman's Banquet - Saturday, April 18, 6:00 PM at the Vernonia Christian Church, 410 North St. Tickets on sale at R&S Market.

The Power of Play: Promoting Health and Creativity - Tuesday, April 21, 6:30 PM at the Vernonia Public Library. Join Jonathan Blasher and Tara Doherty for this Conversation Project sponsored by Oregon Humanities.

Make Vernonia Shine Day - Saturday, April 25, 9:00 AM - Noon. Register at City Hall, 1001 Bridge St. Contact Donna Webb 503-429-5201 or donnatwebb@gmail.com

Spring Tea, sponsored by Vernonia P.E.O. to honor mothers, daughters, grandmothers, aunts, sisters and girlfriends. Saturday, April 25, 2015, 1:00-3:00 PM at the Vernonia Christian Church, 410 North St. Light luncheon, entertainment, photos, etc. $7 tickets available at R&S Market.

Vernonia Community Garden Fair & Plant Sale - Saturday, May 9, 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM at the School Commons. 503-429-0196

Get all your Garden Essentials at the 2nd Annual
Vernonia Community Garden Fair & Plant Sale
May 9th 9am-3pm
at the Vernonia School Commons
1,000 Tomato Plants,
vegie & flower starts plus
many gifts for Mother's Day
Interested in being a vendor?
Contact Penny Costley
503-429-0196