

## Readers Lend Their Voices...

To the Editor,  
WOEC Rate Increase, rev. 2015: Or, HELP WANTED, TWO NEW BOARD MEMBERS!

WOEC hosted this year's rate increase meeting at the Vernonia Fire Station Wednesday night (09/16/15).

You may recall two years ago we filled the WOEC Board room and office lobby to capacity and they may have sought to avoid a repeat of that event. That year they raised our rates over 15% despite our pleading and their initial announced intentions to limit the increase to 13%, with the promise that they would not have to raise them again soon as that would allow them to "build up a reserve."

So this year Bob Perry told us they were going to raise the rates 6% and the only thing left to be determined was how much of the rate increase would be covered by an increase in the base rate, over which we have no control, vs. the consumption charge, which we can partially avoid by simply using less electricity. Other than that, the decision was already made. And so which option did they choose at their meeting Tuesday, September 22? Both; they raised both! So now the average residential "member" will be paying 7.37% more each month; or on average, over \$10/month more. They raised the base rate from \$37/mo. to \$39/mo., and the

consumption rate from \$0.1385/KWH to \$0.1468/KWH. The average WOEC residential member uses 1055 KWH per month. (And though I heat with a heat-pump, my bills average less than 700 KWH/mo. Conservation works!)

So why, we asked, do we need another rate increase? The BPA raised their rates to WOEC by about 7% and that should reflect itself in an increase of our rates of less than 2%; so why 6%? "The weather was too good last spring," explained Bob Perry, facilities manager. This sounds like the lament of the alcoholic who explains he only drinks when he's sad, except when he's so happy he wants to celebrate. Yup, the weather was too good (warm). Had they foreseen this calamity they could have raised our rates 21% last go-round.

Well, not to be too glib. We (WOEC) ran short of revenues because, so they say, we sold too little electricity. I'm sure our mild spring had something to do with it, but I'm more inclined to think we all used less electricity because they raised the rates so high in 2013 that everyone started looking for areas in which to conserve. The demand logically goes down when the price goes up. Their raising the rates yet again this year can only serve to exacerbate that phenomenon. To avoid this death spiral I'm afraid next time they will simply move nearly all of our charges to the base rate so our attempts to conserve will be futile (like the Vernonia water bill!).

At this point it serves no purpose to beat any dead horses or try to explain how they got us into this fix. But I have to say, when they first found themselves standing in a hole, shovel in hand, it should have been abundantly clear how they got there. And when one finds themselves in a hole, for the love of might - QUIT DIGGING!

Unless the Board members put down their shovels and prudently remove themselves by next spring, we will have no choice but to start methodically replacing the Board. And there's no guarantee that once we accomplish that we'll be any better off; but we have to try something. I've tried talking to them but you see how well that's worked. Next summer's will

be a particularly important election as we get to replace the Board President and Vice President, respectively, from District 2 now served by Robert VanNatta (since 1986), and District 5 now served by Bob Paleck. We need two sharp and energetic volunteers to fill these positions. And I recognize, doing any better than the incumbents is not going to be very easy. These are two sharp people. But we must try; for the status quo simply isn't working. Time to quit digging.

I, for one, am quite tired of paying nearly three times more for our electricity than the average Oregon Co-Op member. On average, we'll now pay \$100 more each month than the average Oregon Co-Op member. Heck, we pay nearly twice as much as the second worst Co-Op. Our rates are simply obscene and likely to remain so until we make some changes.

If you live in either District 2 or District 5 please contact the WOEC to have your name put on the ballot by next May. You may have to call the WOEC office (503) 429-3021 to find out in which district you live. The map they provide is a little hard to read, especially near the district boundaries. Incidentally, Roseview Heights is in District 5.

To learn more about this commitment you can call WOEC. Also, if you would please, write up a bio-piece for publishing in the Voice so we all can learn of your intentions and qualifications to run an electric utility. It's not too early to start thinking about this. We all will be most grateful for your service. We need help and thank you for your consideration.

Nick Galaday  
Vernonia

To the Editor,

We are writing to express our support for Clatskanie police officers Alex Stone and Zack Gibson. Stepping forward to report former Police Chief Marvin Hoover's racist on-the-job conduct took a great deal of courage. This is the kind of exceptional behavior we hope police will exhibit when they witness hateful actions from fellow officers.

The comments and actions attributed to Hoover are not only inappropriate but extremely offensive. It is especially troubling that the Chief

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## Upcoming Events

Salmon Festival - Saturday, October 3, 10:00 am - 6:00 pm at Hawkins Park. Pumpkin carving, kids trout pond, scarecrow stuffing, artists, vendors, food, and more.

Timberbound Concert - Friday, October 9, 7:00 pm at the Grange. Evening starts with a presentation of Jenelle Wiggins' photographs by Cory Colburn.

Recognizing Child Molesters - Thursday, October 22, 6:30 pm at the Cabin in Vernonia, 901 Park Dr. Presented by Washington County Sheriffs Office Child Sex Abuse Detectives.

of Police, an officer who is supposed to function as a leader and role model for those on his force, would display such casual contempt towards members of the community he has sworn to serve and protect.

As people living or working in Columbia County, we seek a police force that is in touch with our community and treats everyone fairly and with dignity. Men and women in law enforcement take many risks to keep us safe. However, driven by the increased visibility of incidents of police violence throughout the U.S., there is a growing lack of trust between police and community members. We are saddened that headlines coming out of Columbia County may further contribute to this nationwide problem.

When police officers refuse to tolerate unacceptable behavior by their peers, they send a clear message that trust between community members and law enforcement is a top priority. The public wants to believe that the majority of police are well intentioned, but we question how some cops can behave in deplorable ways without being called out. We need more officers like Alex Stone and Zack Gibson, who follow their conscience and speak up.

People of all backgrounds should feel safe and welcome in Columbia County. It is disturbing to hear that these officers are experiencing harassment and threats for doing exactly what accountable police should do. We hope that Clatskanie and county leaders will commit to showing that retaliation will

THANK YOU

*to everyone who stopped by during our Grand Opening and especially to Sharon and Allison from John L. Scott and Out On a Limb for the flowers.*

**Darlene and Bob**  
**The Rusty Nail**  
805 Bridge Street

## Columbia Humane Society Featured Pet



Meet Duke!

Duke came to the shelter as a stray. He is a great dog and just needs to have room to run and play. It has been proven that he does not do well with cats and he can be reactive to other dogs while on leash. He is going to need a family that is willing to do some training with him. He is very smart and in general a neat guy. He weighs in right around 70 lbs and is about 2 years old. This handsome boy will romp in the yard with you on these

great fall days, and will protect you by the fire on our long winter nights. As always for any questions please don't hesitate to call or email.

Web: [www.columbiahumane.org](http://www.columbiahumane.org)  
2084 Oregon Street  
St. Helens, OR 97051

Phone: 503-397-4353  
Email: [animalwelfare@columbiahumane.org](mailto:animalwelfare@columbiahumane.org)

### 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](mailto:scott@vernoniasvoice.com) or mail to: Letters, PO Box 55, Vernonia, OR 97064.

## Do You 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://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/>