

Council Rejects Amendment for Lincoln School

The City Council failed to generate a motion at their February 1, 2016 meeting to amend the Conservation Easement that was placed on the Lincoln School property at 1462 Bridge Street.

The 1.14 acre property is owned by Warren "Bud" Dow, who made the request to amend the easement along with David Mile of Vernonia Brands, LLC.

Mile has stated that he intends to develop a demonstration cannabis growery at the site that would be an agriculturally based craft enterprise similar to a brewery, winery, or distillery and could make Vernonia a destination within the marijuana industry.

Last year the Council approved a zone change on the property from Residential (R) to General Commercial (GC). While opening the property to multiple commercial uses, including a bed and breakfast, restaurant, or brewpub, the zone change included the Conservation Easement that guarantees that any owner of the building may not tear it down. The Conservation Easement also included language that prohibited any use that is against federal law, which would exclude any business involving marijuana. Dow and his attorney, along with Mile and his attorney, were requesting that the language in the easement be changed to only prohibit uses not in compliance with state and local law.

At the February 1 City Council meeting numerous citizens spoke out against allowing a marijuana grow operation in the middle of

a residential neighborhood. Citizens and neighbors brought up concerns about hazardous materials like fertilizers on site; nitrogen and other chemicals being dumped in the city water system; traffic, noise and disruption to the neighborhood; how the community would be perceived if they allowed this type of business; and asked

marijuana industry. That web site is currently being updated, although a cover page remains with the words "Vernonia Brands Oregon Cannabis" and "Unambiguously Effective Flower and Infused Products" along with Mile's contact information.

At the January 19 Council meeting, Mile reduced



what the benefit would be for Vernonia.

Mile stated that he expected the business to bring \$72,000 annually in new tax revenue to the City and his project would also create jobs. He asked the Council to delay making any decision and suggested that a town hall meeting be held where he could fully explain his business model and answer questions from the community.

Mile had a web site for Vernonia Brands, LLC which, he described as an "aspirational vision," which had been live for several months. That web site called the business "Vernonia Cannabis Ranch" and advertised "growery tours daily." It included references to a long standing practice of growing marijuana in the Vernonia area and his intention to make Vernonia a destination within the

his expectations from what he had made public on the web site, stating that the operation would start with a limited medical grow operation that would contain 48 plants and that the facility could host cannabis conferences for the Portland region.

Mile has continually emphasized that, first and foremost, his business intention is to carve out a niche in the competitive recreational cannabis market, using the place-name "Vernonia" to create a recognizable brand. Mile says he intends to use "provenance marketing" as a strategic tool to develop a cultural and regional identity for the Vernonia products he creates, markets, and sells. Using regional growers to supply his product, Mile's marketing strategy projects sales above \$1 million per month within 18 months of recreational

continued on page 5

County Commissioners Election Heats Up

It's already looking like the May 17, 2016 election for Columbia County Commissioner will be an interesting one.

Three candidates have filed for Position 1 on the three person Board of Commissioners. The seat is currently held by incumbent Earl Fisher. One candidate has also filed to run for Position 3, the position currently held by long time Commissioner Tony Hyde from Vernonia.

Candidates have until March 8 to file to run. The May 17 election is a primary election, but the County Commissioners seats are nonpartisan.

Susan Conn of St. Helens, Margaret Magruder of Clatskanie, and Joel Yarbor of Deer Island have all filed for Position 1. Fisher has stated he does not intend to seek re-election.

Conn, a St. Helens City Councilor, serves as a board member for the Columbia Pacific Economic Development District, is Council Liaison to the St. Helens Economic Development Corporation and regularly attends the Columbia County Economic Development Team meetings. The successful Columbia Pacific Food Bank fundraiser, Empty Bowls, was an idea Conn brought to Columbia County.

Active in many forms of public service, Magruder has served as a member of the Columbia County budget committee for almost 20 years. She was a member of the Oregon Board of Agriculture for eight years, and has been a board member of the Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership for over 15 years, currently serving as Vice-Chair. For approximately 10 years, Magruder has served as a precinct committee person for the Columbia County Democratic Central Committee. She also is a member of the Clatskanie-Quincy Citizens Planning Advisory Committee (CPAC). Formerly, Magruder served on the Columbia School District 5J board of directors.

Yarbor is a U.S. Army veteran who served in the Vietnam War. He previously served on the Columbia County Board of Commissioners for one term from 1995 to 1998. A former carpenter and building contractor, Yarbor now works as a farrier.

Alex Tardif of Scappoose has filed to run for Position 3. Hyde has not yet filed, but has said he "absolutely intends to run."

Tardif, a 2005 graduate of Scappoose High School, earned his bachelor's degree in business administration with a degree in accounting from University of Portland in 2009. He has worked as an income tax auditor for the State of Oregon and later moved into the private sector. For the past six years he has been employed as a tax accountant specializing in departmental cleanup and organization. He also serves on the Scappoose School Board budget committee.

inside

3 saying goodbye

10 vhs winter sports report

11 kids these days

15 valentine classified ads



Like Salmon, We Return Wherever we wander, home will call us back



By Paul J. Pastor

Wherever saltwater meets fresh, you will find miracles.

Nehalem Bay curves, shaped like a humpback whale, bordered by dunes and a long peninsula. And through the narrow neck that runs past the jetty, a fresh river that sprung from the ground up by Timber flows into the sea.

The Nehalem River's water mingles with the Pacific Ocean. Under the waves, as above them, life flourishes. Littlenecks and other clams, scuttling crabs, darting fish. Armored crustaceans, clicking through the swirling washes of sand, spiraling black-green plants, all the rich inhabitants of the place where

waters mix.

And every year, starting slowly, fish by fish, come the mighty Chinook salmon. The males with fiercely hooked jaws, aggressive and surging upstream towards the old red. The females too, thick with orange-red eggs, secret and precious. All pulled by some inner magnetism too powerful to resist, the need to return, to the place they left as young hatch a lifetime before. To go back, from salt water to fresh. To fight their way upstream, through shallowing water and dangers of all kinds. To furrow the pebbles of their home stream, lay their eggs and milt, and do what they were made to do.

They are going home.

Wherever new meets old you will find miracles.

As a teenager, I watched the salmon that came up little Rock Creek, the Nehalem tributary that ran behind our house in Vernonia. We were almost the very end of the line for the fish. By the time they reached us, they were far from the strong silver things that had crossed from saltwater back to fresh some 65 miles away in Nehalem Bay. They looked dull and beaten, almost black. Fins torn and white with decay on some—their decomposition not even waiting for death. Only their imperative—the must-ness of their return to home gravel—seemed to keep them alive.

It was always fall when they came. Leaves fell on the water; leaves of alders and big-leaf maples. In some places, the autumn water was so low that the fishes' backs broke above the

continued on page 8