

City Ready to Adjust Sewer Rates

There may be some good news, at least for some Vernonia utility rate payers, in the near future.

At the February 16, 2016 City Council meeting Council reviewed and discussed the wastewater rate study provided by FCS Group and the Council appears ready to adopt new sewer rates recommended in the report. The proposed rate change would lower rates for customers who use less water and increase it for larger consumers. Adoption of the proposed sewer rates has been recommended by the Vernonia Public Works Committee.

The City has contracted with FCS Group to provide water and sewer rate studies.

A Public Hearing is being scheduled for March 7 with final adoption of the new rates scheduled for March 21.

The new rate structure would calculate the sewer rates on the monthly utility bill based on each customer's average usage, similar to the way water rates are being charged. Residential customers are currently charged using flat rates of \$36.00 for usage and \$57.00 for loan repayment, for a total of \$93.00.

The new sewer rate structure would use a meter multiplier to calculate rates for the Sewer Loan repayment portion of the bill to recover annual debt service; larger meters that place more demand on the system would be charged more. The usage rate would be determined using an average of water consumption during the four winter months of November through February and would include a fixed charge based on meter size that recovers 70 percent of operating expenses. There would also be a variable charge based on usage that recovers 30 percent of operating expenses. Under this model those who use more water and place higher demand on the sewer system would pay more.

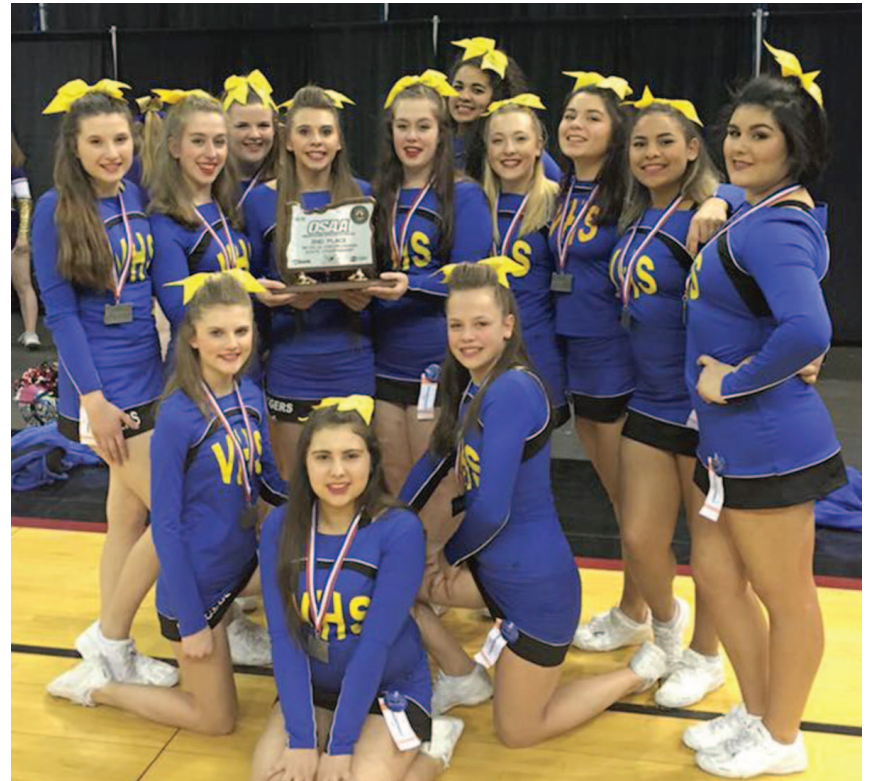
The FCS report offered an example showing that with a fixed charge based on meter size, the monthly bill for an average single family residence with a ¾ inch meter using 3,500 gallons of water would be \$55.27 for the loan repayment,

a \$23.95 fixed charge based on meter size, and an \$8.09 variable charge, for a total of \$87.32.

The Public Works Committee has recommended that the loan repayment fee continue at the proposed rate in the FCS report until the new sewer facility upgrades are completed and the new USDA loan is finalized; it was recommended that the Council revisit the loan repayment fee for adjustment at that time. Council is discussing the possibility of refinancing previous debt service from past sewer projects with the potential of reducing monthly fees but extending the time period needed to repay those loans. According to City Administrator Josette Mitchell the sewer upgrade project is scheduled to be completed in August of 2016.

A Public Hearing to discuss sewer rates is being scheduled for March 7 at City Hall, 1001 Bridge St.

Cheer Squad Takes Second Place at State!



See story on page 11.

Quality Country Care: New Adult Foster Home Opens

After many years without a residential care facility for the elderly in Vernonia, a second adult foster care home has opened in the community.

Richelle Roberson has opened Quality Country Care Adult Foster Home (AFH) just off East Bridge Street near Vernonia Lake. The four bed facility is in a residential neighborhood in a newly remodeled home that Roberson, the care provider, along with her husband Gary, and friend and business partner Malina Bentley, have just opened.

Gary Roberson already owns an adult foster home in Hillsboro where Richelle has worked for the last two years. "I went to high school in Vernonia for a few years and we love it out here, so we decided to move out here and open another adult foster



"My goal is to open my home to people and provide a home like environment," says Roberson. "I really want to treat people with respect and maintain their dignity and help them achieve their goals and do their best in their daily activities."

Quality Country Care AFH joins Creekside Adult Foster Home as the only two long term residential care facilities in the Vernonia community.

home," says Roberson.

A Certified Medical Assistant (CMA) for the last 10 years, Roberson is currently enrolled as a full time, online student at PCC, working towards a gerontology degree, with a goal of someday opening a memory care center.

"When I first started working in an adult foster home setting two years ago, I just fell in love with the

people there and they became just like my family," explains Roberson. "To me it's not even necessarily a job, it's just more about helping people."

Quality Country Care has three bedrooms - two private rooms with a shared bathroom and one shared room with a private bathroom. There is a large living room, a dining room, a full kitchen and private quarters for the caregivers. The entire home is handicapped accessible.

Roberson says her facility is a Level 2 home which means they can provide a broad spectrum of daily living assistance.

Roberson is aware there is a need in the Vernonia community and hopes to provide a place for local residents where they can stay in their community and allow their families to visit as often as they like without having to travel too far. "We hope to become a part of the community and serve their needs," says Roberson.

You can reach Richelle Roberson at Quality Country Care AFH at 503-429-1410 or by email at QualityCountryCare@gmail.com.

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