

# Vernonia City News...

**At the March 7, 2016 City Council meeting:**

**Council Holds Public Hearing on Sewer Rate Adjustment** – Council held a Public Hearing on proposed changes to the current structure for sewer rates. During the hearing there were no comments in favor or against the proposed changes. Scott Laird provided neutral testimony and thanked the Public Works Committee for their hard work in preparing the information for the hearing. Later in the meeting, Council instructed staff to prepare an ordinance to adopt a new sewer rate structure. (See full story on front page.)

**Council Approves Parks Fee Increases** – Based on a recommendation from the Parks Committee, Council approved changes to the parks fee schedule, which provides slight increases to most camping fees and brings fees in line with other regional park facilities. The new park fees will be part of a new Master Fee Schedule that Council will be asked to adopt at their March 21 meeting.

**Council Approves High Water Mark Sign** – Council approved a request by the Army Corp of Engineers to install a high water mark sign for the 2007 flood at the corner of Bridge Street and Washington Avenue as a way to remind peo-

ple that floods do occur in this area. This sign project is an initiative of the Silver Jackets, an interagency group that looks for solutions to flooding issues and to increase flood preparedness awareness. Installing the sign helps with the FEMA community rating system and earns the City points toward lowering flood insurance rates.

**Council Approves Contract for Sewer Feasibility Study** – Council approved a proposal from OTAK, the City's Engineering firm, to perform a feasibility study for the addition of a sewer spur that could service development on California Avenue and also redirect sewage from the Spencer hill area. Cost is \$5,000 and work will begin immediately.

**Council Forgives Water Fee for Ridge Riders** – Council approved a request by the Ridge Riders equestrian group to forgive a bill for water usage that occurred in December 2015 from a broken pipe at the horse arena. The Ridge Riders had shut off the service but the City failed to lock the meter and someone tried to turn on the water service, resulting in 102,000 gallons leaked due to a broken pipe. The meter has since been locked.

**Council Approves Healthy Options Resolution** – Council approved Resolution 19-15, which sets forth the City of

Vernonia's commitment to put healthy options within reach of all residents through the HEAL Cities Campaign by supporting the local Open Air Market farmers market, increasing bicycle and pedestrian connectivity and safety, and providing healthy programs for City employees.

**Hydrants Not Providing Enough Pressure on Knott Street** – City Administrator Josette Mitchell told Council that a test of fire hydrants had revealed that a hydrant on Mist Drive provided 1,130 gallons per minute (gpm) of pressure, but that the hydrant at 1359 Knott Street only provided 800 gpm, and the hydrant at the Nickerson Ridge development only provided 700 gpm. Mitchell told Council that based on those test results, any new development in the area would need to include fire suppression sprinkler systems.

**Lions Club Presents Pool Restoration Project** – Rick Hobart, representing the Vernonia Lions Club, made a presentation on the Dewey Pool Project to the Council and explained the Lions plan to replace the liner and fence at the kiddie pool, and to fix the steps and seating area. Hobart told Council the Lions are donating \$7,500 to the project, and they have received \$1,700 in donations. Council committed up to \$3,000 from the Parks

fund for the project. An account has been set up at U.S. Bank to accept donations.

**Fire Chief Presents Levy to Council** – Chief Dean Smith of the Vernonia Rural Fire Protection District (VRFPD) told Council a bond levy has been placed on the May 17 election ballot to raise funding so VRFPD can hire a Training Captain to be responsible for working with volunteers, and responding to calls when on duty. Smith said a second paid responder is necessary due to a shortage of volunteers and department burn out. He said staff and 12 volunteers responded to 548 calls for service last year. Smith told the Council that if a Training officer is hired VRFPD could try to recruit cadets to help cover volunteer shifts.

**Topics From the Floor** – Mike Bufum told Council that he agrees with the Time, Place, and Manner Ordinance regulating marijuana businesses the City is proposing. He said he would like to be able to sell glassware in his store and was told there are no rules restricting him from doing so.

Amanda Rose Sicard, representing the VHS leadership class, updated the Council on activities at the high school, including winter sports, robotics, band, and student council.

## Council Moves Forward With Sewer Rate Change *continued from front page*

the water used during the spring, summer and fall seasons when customers will be using water that does not go to the treatment plant.

The City initially hired FCS Group to perform a sewer rate study in 2013 to determine the necessary rates required to support the proposed wastewater treatment plant upgrade project that is currently being constructed, along with the funds required to operate the utility service for the community.

Following the initial study it was determined that the data used in the study was inaccurate and an extensive ground truthing project was undertaken by the City to determine the exact number of utility connections in the City system. In addition, the City decided to split fixed and variable costs to calculate income needed to operate the system.

In February 2016 FCS delivered the results of a second rate study, using the new data from the ground truthing project. The second rate study outlined the number of connections, the amount of the annual debt, the amount of annual revenue/expenses, and the subsequent fees needed to operate the system and to repay debt. This is the rate study the City is now using to create the new rate structure.

In addition the City considered an option to refinance the current debt payments, which would have lowered current rates but would have extended the number of years needed to pay back the debt and increase the amount of inter-

est the City would pay over the life of the debt service.

Instead the Council chose to keep the current debt payment schedule and agreed to revisit the refinancing option once the current construction project is completed.

Council is scheduled to discuss approval of a final version of the ordinance that will include the new rate structure at their March 21 meeting.

### Upcoming Election Info

**Oregon's Presidential Primary:** May 17  
(including local and County elections)

**Last day to register by mail:** April 26

To register to vote online or to update your voter registration go to:  
<http://sos.oregon.gov/voting/Pages/voteinor.aspx>

You can find a voter registration card at Vernonia City Hall, Vernonia Library or county elections office. You can also ask the Columbia County elections office to mail you a card:  
230 Strand St.,  
St. Helens, OR 97051  
(503) 397-7214, (503) 397-7266 fax,  
Office Hours: 8:30am - 5:00pm (M-Th)

### NOTICE OF BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING

A public meeting of the Budget Committee of the City of Vernonia, Columbia County, State of Oregon, to discuss the budget for the fiscal year July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017, will be held at the Cabin in Vernonia, 901 Park Drive, Vernonia OR 97064.

**The meeting will take place on April 12th at 6:30pm**

The purpose of the meeting is to receive the budget message, the Budget Document and to establish the agenda for future meetings. No deliberation will take place at this meeting.

An additional, separate meeting of the Budget Committee will be held to take public comment. Any person may appear at that meeting to discuss to proposed programs with the Budget Committee.

**The meeting for public comment will be on:**

**Date: April 19th, 2016 Time: 6:30 pm Location: Cabin in Vernonia**

A copy of the budget document may be inspected or obtained on or after April 12th, 2016 at City Hall, 1001 Bridge St, between the hours of 9am - 5pm Monday - Friday

### Police Blotter March 1 - 14, 2016

**REPORTS TAKEN**

- March 4, 2016 Arrest on a Warrant near Scappoose Vernonia HWY
- March 5, 2016 Arrest on DUII and cited for Driving While Suspended and Driving Uninsured
- March 4, 2016 Report of Found Property

**CITATIONS / OTHER VIOLATIONS**

- March 13, 2016 Cited for Speed Racing near Bridge St.

**Vernonia Police Department responds to calls that do not always end in Arrest, Report, or Citation.**  
03/01/2016 through 03/14/2016 VPD had 51 calls for service.

### Vernonia City Council Meetings and Closures

**City Council Meetings are scheduled for 7:00 pm:**  
Monday, March 21, 2016  
Monday, April 4, 2016

**City Closures are scheduled for:**  
Monday, May 30, 2016  
*Memorial Day*

*Dates and times subject to change due to conflicts of schedules*



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