

Meet the Candidates *continued from page 3*

Center, and the proposed Senior Center/ Food Bank – and said those projects give the City something to build on and help grow the community and relieve some of the stress of high utility rates. He also expressed pride in seeing the last two Councils work to complete the \$7 million Waste Water Treatment Plant Upgrade, bringing it in under budget and hopefully without a rate increase. “That took a lot of watchfulness on the part of the Council,” said McNair.

Buffum said moving the school out of the flood plain was a positive thing for Vernonia and said he wants to see the school bond passed and the campus completed.

Tierney discussed the progress the City has made towards completing projects that were included in the Capital Improvement Plan adopted in 2013. “We’ve done a lot of work since 2011,” said Tierney. Tierney praised the work of the city staff and the effort to cross-train staff. “They are very competent and dedicated and I am so proud of this

staff.”

Leonetti talked about the way Vernonia citizens care for each other and work together during hard times and disasters. He also noted the work that has gone into Spencer Park and the high amount of use the fields are receiving.

Mayo discussed the economic turnaround that Columbia County, and Vernonia, has experienced and noted the recovery of the real estate market as a real positive for local property values and the tax base. He said he liked Vernonia’s festivals and the groups of people, like car and motorcycle clubs, who visit, and others who use the trails. He mentioned that Vernonia has some growth steps in place and said as County Commissioner he would work to improve Vernonia’s infrastructure that the county controls – roads, culverts, and parks.

Magruder also noted the economic turnaround and mentioned County offices being open five days a week again, the Cascade Tissue plant that is scheduled to open in Scappoose,

the Clatskanie City Council’s recent decision to contract with the County Sheriff’s Office for local police services, the Columbia County Fair, the high level of community service by volunteers, and the CZ Trail, as all positive things going on in the County. “I just think we are on a trajectory to do some wonderful things,” said Magruder.

What are some specific issues or concerns you would like to try and address if elected?

Mayo said he would like to try and simplify the County budget and provide more detail so it can be better understood. He said he would like to have an accounting of the gravel depletion fee and the amount of gravel leaving the County. He said he would like to halt any new enterprise zones in the County. “They are nothing more than welfare for big business,” said Mayo.

Magruder said it was important for the County to raise tax revenues without raising taxes and provide the County services that we all benefit from, mentioning roads, public safety, and veterans services. She said we need to attract new business and industry to the County because they pay the same tax rates but cost less for the County to provide services to them. She mentioned Right Line Equipment in Rainier as a local business that is expanding. “We have some great opportunities throughout the County to increase our tax revenue,” said Magruder. She also said she would like to see the County improve communication and include all citizens in the decision making process.

Leonetti said the City needs to maintain their parks, because they are a draw and will bring visitors. “There has been an increase of people coming into our little town and enjoying their stay here so I would like to see the parks step up, clean up, and make things available to our visitors,” said Leonetti. He also expressed concern about the growing transient population, safety, and crime. He suggested a “Neighbors Night Out” to bring people together and share ideas and get to know each other.

Tierney suggested that street conditions and storm water are the next two major infrastructure issues for the City to address as part of the Capital Improvement Plan. She also said she would like to resolve the downtown tree issue and replace the current trees with something appropriate. She also mentioned finding grants to complete

the City Park Plan, replacing the City water meters, and continuing policies that designate Vernonia as a Healthy City, as priorities.

McNair commented on the way past generations stepped up, even though the community has never been wealthy, to complete public works projects. “It’s part of our duty to do the same for the kids and future generations that come along,” said McNair. “We need to come up with a way through the budgeting process to repair the streets. Just because you can’t do it all at once, doesn’t mean you don’t try and do it a little bit at a time.” He mentioned investing in and maintaining the park system as a priority, particularly Spencer Park. He also suggested freeing up some money in the budget to provide micro loans for economic development.

Wagner said she would like to see more places and activities for youth. She said she was concerned about abandoned homes and would like to see the police given more authority to deal with squatters, and also see the City work with their partners to provide services for people living in abandoned houses and help them “become successful citizens as opposed to just doing damage.” She would also like to find ways to encourage more community participation in government.

Buffum says he is concerned about the lack of rental properties in the community and the number of homes that were lost in the 2007 flood. “A lot of those people worked in Vernonia, which means businesses have a smaller pool of people to choose from as employees,” says Buffum. He also said he would like to see the City’s urban growth boundary expanded to include more area outside the flood plain so more homes could be built.

Please choose one of the following topics and explain your position on the issue and how you would try to address it? City: 1) Restricting hours in City Parks at night to prevent vandalism, 2) Cutting down trees in downtown, 3) High water and sewer rates. County: 1) Funding for jail operations, 2) Funding Columbia County Rider transit system, 3) Transporting dangerous fuels across the county.

Tierney is concerned that restricting parks hours will not allow people to get the exercise they need, impacting the health of the community,

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