

Getting to the Roots of Rythm and American Music: A Conversation with Joe Seamons

Musician Joe Seamons brings the Rutabaga Rhythm Workshop to Vernonia on April 26-27

Joe Seamons should be a familiar name to regular readers of *Vernonia's Voice*. Joe and his music have been the subject of several articles in this publication and he and his band, Timberbound have performed numerous times in Vernonia during the last several years, including appearances at the Vernonia Friendship Jamboree in 2014 and 2015, and several concerts and dances at the Vernonia Grange Hall.

Seamons considers himself a musical folklorist, archivist, and preservationist, who has delved deeply into the roots of Americana music, especially folk, bluegrass and blues. He is especially interested in music from the Pacific Northwest, but his musical interests and influences range far and wide.

In addition to his work with Timberbound, interpreting the local music of Vernonians Kim and John Cunnick, Seamons was also recently involved in a release on Smithsonian Folkways Records. That album collected recordings by various current artists covering all of Woody Guthrie's Columbia River songs, written when Guthrie was employed by the Bonneville Power Administration in 1941. "Roll Columbia" was the first time all 26 Guthrie songs were recorded and released together, in fact several of the songs had never been previously recorded anywhere. Not only did Seamons play on several of the recordings with Timberbound and with musical partner Ben Hunter, but he was one of the initiators of the project and instrumental (pun intended!) in gathering the musicians and bringing the project to fruition.

The Rhapsody Project is another venture that Seamons is spearheading along with Hunter. Through the Rhapsody Project, Seamons and Hunter



spend several days visiting schools and communities around the country, working mostly with young students in workshops and public events to promote an appreciation for roots music and encourage inter-generational and inter-cultural interactions.

Now based in Seattle, Seamons will visit Vernonia on April 26 and 27 to present the "Rutabaga Rhythm Workshop," along with another of his many musical collaborators, Tina Dietz. Seamons and Dietz will visit with Vernonia and Mist Elementary students, Vernonia area homeschool students, and also perform with Timberbound in an all-ages concert and dance at the Vernonia Grange.

Vernonia's Voice recently caught up with Joe Seamons by phone to talk about of his Vernonia visit and some of his other recent projects. The following is an excerpt from our conversation.

Vernonia's Voice: *Tell us about the Rutabaga Rhythm Workshop and what you will be doing during your visit to Vernonia?*

Joe Seamons: "This is a new program for me, even though it is technically part of the Rhapsody Project, which we bring all over the country, but Ben won't be here. What we'll really be exploring is the role of rhythm as it pertains to lyrics and basically getting kids thinking about the fact that even when you sing words, you're still making rhythms. So, connecting the act of clapping and stomping to singing, because for some kids rhythm comes really naturally and for other people, like me, rhythm is not your strong suit and you kind of have to think about it. So, it's about listening to that part of yourself that has rhythm and trusting that. Anybody who has involuntarily tapped their foot to music has demonstrated that they have rhythm. I'm focused on having some fun with songs that the kids can stomp and clap along to, and then also have the kids reflect

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City to Adjust Water Rates

Vernonia residents will see a small change in their water rates beginning July 1, 2017.

The Vernonia City Council voted to adjust water rates for city utility customers at their April 17, 2017 City Council meeting. The changes are based on a recommendation from the Utility Rate Review Committee, made up of members of the Public Works Committee and City staff, which is mandated to meet annually to review city utility revenues and expenses, and recommend adjustments to rates as needed.

The changes include an increase to the Base Rate charge, from 24.50 to \$29.30 and a \$1.25 decrease to the Consumptive Rate per meter multiplier from \$4.25 per 1,000 gallons to \$3.00 per 1,000 gallons. The Council also approved a decrease of \$2.00 in the Water Loan rate from \$11.50 to \$9.50 per meter multiplier.

The effect on ratepayers will vary depending on water meter size and amount of water consumed.

According to the staff report presented to the Council, many customers with 3/4" meters (almost all the city's residential customers) may see a small increase in the water portion of their bill, while customers who use more water will see a slight decrease. The biggest impact will be to the City's two largest customers who have 4" meters, who will see a significant decrease in their monthly bill.

"An unfortunate side effect of using the base plus consumptive rate structure, along with having a low base rate and a high consumptive rate, is large meters and larger water users are being

treated unfairly by subsidizing the majority of water users in Vernonia," stated the staff report. "...most of the increase is not an increase at all, but rather the result of the City being more equitable by having those customers actually pay their fair share."

The staff report notes that the concept behind a base plus consumptive rate structure is to ensure the maintenance and operation of the water system through the base rate, regardless of water consumption by customers, and covering water production costs through the consumption charge.

The City is able to reduce the Water Loan rate due to the increase in the number of previously unoccupied homes being reoccupied, and the increase in the number of new homes being built. The result has been excess revenue of approximately \$11,000 each year over the last two years, collected through the loan rate. The City is required to maintain a one year loan repayment reserve of \$120,000, which they have set aside.

"...an opportunity to decrease rates for the ratepayers is not going to come along very often," states the staff report. "...we are in a position to lower the Water Loan rate as a way to begin refunding the excess revenue, while being fiscally responsible as an organization."

The Council voted 3-1 to approve the recommended changes, with Councilors Mike Seager and Jill Hult, and Mayor Mario Leonetti all voting yes, while Councilor Bruce McNair voted no. Councilor McNair gave no reason for his no vote.

Why I Support the School Bond

Vernonia's Voice checked in with a cross section of Vernonia residents to find out why they are supporting the Vernonia School Bond on the May 16, 2017 election ballot.

Ernie Smith, Business Owner, Youth Sports Coach, School Board Member—

I love this community and the schools are the heart of any community. If you look at any community that is going to grow, or if industry is ever going to move in, the first thing they're going to look at is the school system. If someone is going to move here, they're going to look at the school system. The people that are worried about their taxes going up, you have to look at the positive side and their investment is worth a lot more than it was before. The schools do nothing but good in our community and anybody that thinks that it is taking away is a fool. It's the heart of our community and it's where our kids are taught to be good citizens and learn how to survive in life and if we don't support them, then who is?

Diana Peach, Local Author— My children are all grown and out of school, but I support the School Bond anyway, because this isn't about me, it's about

the strength of our community and the opportunities of "our" children. Investing in our children, our town, and our futures seems like a great idea. A well-loved school that has the commitment of the community is part of what makes Vernonia a special place to live.

Sharon Bernal, Real Estate Agent, School Bond Committee Chair— It's important for the vitality of our community. Most people that are going to be interested in moving to Vernonia are going to look at the schools first to make sure that they want to place their children there. If we don't get the schools loans paid off, we're going to start losing teachers and aides and then we're going to start losing students. There will be a trickle down effect that impacts our businesses, property values and everything else. The vitality of a community, I believe, always begins with the school, and we need to have a good school. It's important that our schools be strong and healthy.

Tobie Finzel, Community Volunteer, School Budget Committee Member— Even though we have no children or grandchildren in the Vernonia School

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