

# Vernonia City News...

## At the October 16, 2017 City Council Meeting:

**Council Hears Presentation on Skate Park** – Council heard a presentation by Wendy Sears about a proposal to construct a skate park in Spencer Park. About 60 community members were in attendance in support of the proposal. (See full story on front page.)

**Council Receives Results of Smoking Survey** – Council received the results of a survey they sent out concerning proposed smoking restrictions in City Parks. 153 people responded to the survey, with 83 saying they opposed the restrictions, 67 saying they favored the restrictions, and 3 saying they favored the restrictions but with changes. (See full story on front page.)

**Topics From the Floor** – Jeremy Simmons addressed the Council in support of the skate park proposal and told the Council he had 82 signatures on petitions that had recently been circulated in support of the project. He read several positive comments the project had received from other citizens.

Kim Tierney asked the Council to approve the ordinance that restricts smoking in city parks. She said 80% of Columbia County residents do not smoke, and it would be appropriate to limit places in parks for smoking. She said that times have changed and smoking is no longer allowed in places like bars, in cars with children, and it makes sense to limit in parks where children congregate.

Scott Laird also spoke in favor of smoking restrictions in parks. He said signage can act as an enforcement tool and reminded the Council that long

time resident and former City Councilor Shirlee Daughtry used to complain about cigarette butts in Hawkins Park around the Scout Cabin and ask when the Parks Committee was going to do something about smoking in parks.

Michelle Moline updated the Council on progress to address drainage issues at the Lincoln School where she runs several businesses and has had conflicts with neighbors.

Brittanie Roberts thanked the City and staff for installing baby changing stations in restrooms around the city.

Jack Harvey asked if the business at the Lincoln School has a business license and said the property is a garbage dump. He said it's time for the City to rethink the rezoning of the property as "Commercial."

**Council Approves Seismic Monitoring Equipment Placement** – Council approved the placement of seismic monitoring equipment at Airport Park. The equipment is being placed by the Pacific Northwest Seismic Network, Department of Earth Sciences, University of Oregon, who were looking for a place in the Vernonia area that was publicly owned and away from heavy traffic.

**Council Approves Irrigation System for Spencer Park** – Council approved a recommendation from the Parks Committee to purchase the equipment needed to create an irrigation system to water sports fields at Spencer Park. Cost of the system is estimated to be \$3,000.

**Council Approves Water Department Rules** – Council approved the first and second reading of Ordinance 915, amending Ordinance 895. The Ordinance

was previously read at the October 2, 2017 City Council meeting, but due to the absence of City Recorder Stephanie Borst, proper procedure was not followed, and it needed to be done again. The ordinance allows city staff to adjust a customer's bill following the discovery and correction of a water or sewer leak that is the customer's responsibility.

**Council Discusses Lake Pump** – Council discussed a recommendation from the Parks Committee that the City request a report on the operation of the pump at Vernonia Lake from ODFW who paid for and installed the new pump system. The system has not operated correctly since it was installed and is currently unable to pump water from the Nehalem River into the Lake. City Administrator Josette Mitchell said she has already contacted the ODFW representative responsible for the project and requested an update.

**Police Chief Report** – Police Chief Mike Conner said he has been in contact with ODOT concerning the yellow center lines on Bridge Street that extend into the intersection of Rose Avenue at the flashing light. Conner said he was told it was done on purpose by ODOT as a safety measure to protect vehicles sitting at the red flashing light on Rose Avenue from vehicles turning off Bridge Street and cutting the corner too closely.

Conner told the Council that it looks like Officer Cody Pesio will be leaving the Department for a position with the Columbia County Sheriff's Office, and that Conner has begun the process for hiring a replacement in case Officer Pesio accepts the offer.

**City Administrator Report** – City Administrator Josette Mitchell updated the Council on several current projects that have seen minimal progress in the last two weeks, including the Wastewater Treatment Plant, Rose Avenue Project, Spencer Park Picnic Shelter, street paving projects, and the Mile Bridge (Green Bridge).

**Council Holds Workshop on Greenman Field, Ora Bolmeier Trees** – Council held a workshop and discussed potential future uses of the Greenman Field and the stadium bleachers. The property is owned by the City of Vernonia but is leased to the Vernonia School District for sports events. The bleachers are currently not in use as they have been deemed unsafe by a structural engineer. The City has received a bid for \$15,000 for a temporary shoring up to keep the roof from collapsing. A permanent fix will be much more expensive, and the City has not yet received a bid. The Council discussion ranged from tearing down the bleachers to putting on a new roof. Discussion also centered on potential community uses and revenue generation to re-coop the cost for repairs. The discussion also touched on whether the lease with the School District holds them responsible for maintaining the facility. Council scheduled a joint workshop with the Parks Committee to further discuss potential uses and assess bids on October 30 at 6:00 pm.

Council discussed whether trees in Ora Bolmeier Park have root disease and need to be removed because of potential liability. Council instructed City Administrator Josette Mitchell to hire a professional arborist to assess the situation.

## Skate Park Advocates Pack City Council *continued from front page*

which likes to work with underserved communities to help with fundraising and generating community involvement.

She said her group would like to build a 3,500 square foot concrete bowl facility with jumps, slides, and a snake. She says she has had early discussions with several skate park architects, including Dreamland and Evergreen. Cost is estimated to be between \$30-\$40 per square foot, or about \$150,000 total.

While the site where the group is seeking to construct the facility is not in the Flood Way, it is in the Flood Zone, so construction will require a "zero gain" of materials; an equal amount of material must be removed as is added. A park with a bowl would help achieve that.

Sears listed other benefits of the skate park and its proposed location, including easy visibility, location near the linear trail, getting kids off the couch and physically active, and building a sense of community and cooperation. She said the park project would support exercise, discipline, and rewards, and would have the potential to generate local events, classes, and training. It would keep kids engaged, off the streets, and reduce street skating.

Sears told the Council that the Oregon Legislature recently reinstated Recreational Immunity with the passage

of SB 327 in July of 2017, which says landowners are free from responsibility if they make their property available for use for free and keep the facility maintained. She said City Administrator Josette Mitchell is in discussions with the City's insurance carrier to find out more specific details. She cited the cities of Reedville, Tualatin, Forest Grove, Tigard and Scappoose that have skate park facilities and said none have ever been sued.

Sears had previously made presentations to the Vernonia Parks Committee and the Vernonia Lions Club. The Parks Committee raised concerns about past efforts that had failed, limited funding to help get the project started, and whether the park would receive enough use to merit the investment. She said she had discussed the possibility with the Parks Committee of working together to be part of an application to the Oregon State Parks Local Government Grant program for funding.

Sears asked the Council for approval to move forward with planning and fundraising for a skate park that could be open all year round. She said her group would begin fundraising efforts as soon as they had that approval.

The Council appeared receptive to the idea but took no official action.

### Police Blotter • October 1-16, 2017

#### Reports

- October 3, 2017 Report of Illegal Burning near "F" Street

#### Citations/Other

- October 1, 2017 Cited for Careless Driving and Failure to Maintain Lane near Nehalem HWY N
- October 3, 2017 Cited for Driving Uninsured near Nehalem HWY S
- October 4, 2017 Cited for Violation of the Posted Speed 55/35 mph near North Mist Drive
- October 8, 2017 Cited for Driving

- While Suspended and No Insurance near East Bridge Street
- October 10, 2017 Cited for Violation of the Posted Speed near Rose Avenue
- October 13, 2017 Cited for Driving While Suspended and Failure to Carry Proof of Insurance near Rose Avenue

**Vernonia Police Department responds to calls that do not always end in Arrest, Report, or Citation. 10/01/2017 through 10/16/2017 VPD had 125 calls for service**

**The Vernonia Transfer Station is open on the 2nd and 4th Saturday from 8am-2pm**

**October 28  
November 11**

*Dates and times are subject to change due to weather*

### Vernonia City Council Meetings and Closures

**City Council Meetings are scheduled for 7:00 pm:**  
Monday, November 6, 2017  
Monday, November 20, 2017

**City Closures are scheduled for:**  
Friday, November 10, 2017  
*Veterans Day Observed*

*Dates and times subject to change*