

Vernonia City News...

At the November 20, 2017 City Council Meeting:

Finance Report – Finance Director Angie Handegard presented the Council with a finance report for the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2017-18.

Noakes Road Water Leak Discussed – Council discussed an issue that was brought forward at their last meeting concerning a water line dispute on Noakes Road. Tim Nebergall reported that it appears he has a leak in his water line, but is unable to locate it on his property. City staff told Council that this water line is a bit of an anomaly as the line was installed privately about 30 years ago and attached to the City water system. The line which services Mr. Nebergall and property owned by Susan Vandehey traverses private property owned by Ronald Jermann; Mr. Nebergall's water meter is on the Vandehey property. City Administrator Josette Mitchell said the City will be installing a new main water line in the next year, but did not offer an immediate solution to the issue. Council voted 4-0 to put the issue of payment for the water leak on hold, with Mayor Mario Leonetti abstaining due to a conflict of interest.

Council Schedules Workshop on Cemetery Properties – Council scheduled a workshop on December 11, 2017 at 6:00 pm to discuss options for the house and properties owned by the City adjacent to the Memorial Cemetery at the top of Bridge Street. Council has indicated interest in potentially selling the house and some property.

Council Schedules Workshop on Media Policy – Council scheduled a workshop on January 8 at 6:00 pm with their legal counsel to review the City's media policy.

Council Discusses Training Options – Council discussed scheduling several trainings for themselves, including sessions dealing with ethics, and meeting procedures, and authorized City Recorder Stephanie Borst to pursue scheduling those trainings.

City Administrator Report – City Administrator Josette Mitchell told Council the construction contract for the Senior Center/Vernonia Cares facility is still being finalized and will go out to bid soon. Mitchell said construction is expected to begin in the spring.

Mitchell told Council that the City has been notified that a date has

been set for June 2018 for the hearing in the case between the City of Vernonia and R. Smejkal.

Mitchell said work parties are being scheduled for volunteers to complete the roof on the Spencer Park picnic shelter.

Mitchell told Council she will be on the agenda at the December School Board meeting and will jointly submit estimates with Superintendent Aaron Miller to the School Board for the expense to shore up or fence off the Greenman Field Bleachers.

Topics From the Floor – Wendy Sears updated the Council on the Skate Park project and said they will be meeting with two park designers in early December. She also said she is working with the City Administrator to create a timeline for construction. She attended the Parks Committee meeting on November 15 along with the City Administrator, and discussed including the Skate Park in a State Park Grant application.

Janet Gray asked Council to address needed repairs for streets and sidewalks. She was invited to attend the Public Works Committee and express her concerns to them.

At the December 4, 2017 City Council Meeting:

Council Agrees to Water Rate Review – Council agreed to a request by the Public Works Committee to consider a change in the way water rates are calculated. Currently customers receive their first 2,000 gallons of water at no charge, called an allowance. The Public Works Committee is recommending removing the allowance because it creates a subsidized group whose use is paid for by higher water users. The Public Works Committee also noted that by discontinuing the allowance it will make the billing process more streamlined for staff. The potential change to the rate system will be reviewed by the Rate Review Committee, a group that includes two members of the Public Works Committee, two members of the City Council, and members of City staff, who will provide the City Council with data that reflects the impact the change will have to current rates.

Police Report – Patrol Sergeant Shawn Carnahan sat in for Chief Michael Conner. Carnahan said Conner is recovering well from recent knee surgery and is awaiting a doctor's release to return to duty.

Ten Years After the Flood *continued from front page*

As the water on Rock Creek continued to rise throughout the afternoon, the town was cut in half, and then into other various sections, stranding residents, some who had children they were unable to reach. Roads became impassable into and out of town, isolating the community and leaving many residents stranded and surrounded by water. First Responders made many rescues in boats and SUVs but eventually had to discontinue rescue efforts in the early evening, as darkness and strong currents made it unsafe. Many stranded residents spent the night of December 3 in the dark, upstairs, helpless against the water that inundated the ground levels of their homes. The shelters were overrun with displaced people, and neighbors opened their doors to help. The rain finally stopped and water began receding over night.

The immediate aftermath

The Oregon National Guard reached Vernonia the next day, Tuesday, and took over rescue efforts. Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski arrived by helicopter to help assess the damage, which was immense. All three school buildings and the Head Start building were damaged, along with the West Oregon Electric Co-op office, the Providence Health Clinic, the Vernonia Senior Center, and the

Vernonia Cares Food Bank. Numerous businesses along Bridge Street close to Rock Creek, and in the downtown corridor, suffered damage, including the gas station and the only grocery store in town, as did hundreds of homes throughout Vernonia and surrounding Columbia County along the Nehalem.

In the days following the flood, volunteers, led by Kim and Jim Tierney, along with other volunteers who were not affected by flooding, immediately set up an office at City Hall and began collecting data and information about residents and homes that were impacted by the flood. That collected data would be critical for homeowners when Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) arrived and began processing and awarding claims, and helped to build a case for other state and federal funding to move essential services.

Once the roads to the community were reopened, donations and volunteers began pouring in to help with the recovery effort. Local citizens also came forward in droves to assist their friends and neighbors and filled critical roles in the relief effort. City Hall was initially the hub of volunteer management and relief activities. Lincoln School was turned into a donation center and the Vernonia

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Vernonia Police Blotter November 14-30, 2017

Reports Taken/Arrests

- November 16, 2017 Report of Theft near East Bridge Street
- November 20, 2017 Report of a Hit and Run near California Avenue
- November 24, 2017 Report of Theft on East Bridge Street
- November 30, 2017 Report of Theft on East Bridge Street

Citations/Other


- November 14, 2017 Cited for Violation of the Basic Rule 74/55 mph near Nehalem HWY South
- November 15, 2017 Cited

- for Failure to Carry Proof of Insurance near Jefferson Avenue
- November 15, 2017 Cited for Failure to Obtain Livestock and Domesticated Fowl Permit near Cougar Street
- November 16, 2017 Cited for Driving While Suspended and Driving Uninsured near Bridge Street
- November 29, 2017 Cited for Driving While Suspended, Failure to Carry Proof of Insurance, and Failure to Maintain Lane near Bridge Street

Vernonia Police Department responds to calls that do not always end in Arrest, Report, or Citation. 11/14/2017 through 11/30/2017 VPD had 124 calls for service.

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10-5 Tue-Sat
12-4 Sun

The Vernonia Transfer Station is open on the 1st and 3rd Saturday in December 8am-2pm

December 16

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, December 18, 2017

City Closures are scheduled for:
Noon - Friday, December 22, 2017
Christmas Eve Observed
Monday, December 25, 2017
Christmas Day
Noon - Friday, December 29, 2017
New Years Eve Observed
Monday, January 1, 2018
New Years Day

Dates and times subject to change