

Vernonia City News...

At the May 21, 2018 City Council Meeting:

Council Hears “Save the Grandstands” Plan – The group working to save the Grandstands at Greenman Field presented their business plan to the Council. (See full story on front page.)

City Accepts Grant for Street Paving – Council voted to accept a Small City Allotment Grant from the State of Oregon to pave portions of Louisiana Avenue from south of Mississippi Avenue to B Street and continuing on B Street to Oregon Avenue. The estimated total cost of the project is \$88,000. The grant will cover up to \$50,000 of the project.

Council Approves Letter of Support for CC Rider – Council approved a Letter of Support on behalf of Columbia County Transit for an upcoming grant application to fund a growth management plan and research for development for future routes for the CC Rider public transportation system.

EMS Week – Trish Smith, representing Metro West Ambulance and the Vernonia Ambulance Association, was in attendance as the Council recognized May 20-26 as EMS Week with a proclamation, read by City Recorder Stephanie Borst, that acknowledged the Emergency

Medical Services system and the personnel that serve the Vernonia Community.

Library Surplus Items – Council approved a recommendation from Library Director Shannon Romtvedt that the following items be surplused either for sale or donation: various shelving, HP 4100n Laserjet Printer, large felt/white board.

Topics From the Floor – John Brewer asked the Council when the City will be able to lease properties, acquired following the 2007 flood, to adjacent property owners. Brewer was told the City is still gathering letters of interest and will be reviewing the program in June or July.

Del Allen asked the Council to reverse their vote to demolish the grandstands at Greenman Field. “If we all work together we can turn this into something great and something we can all be proud of,” said Allen.

At the June 4, 2018 City Council Meeting:

Council Approves 2018-19 Budget – Following a Public Hearing, at which there was no testimony either in favor or against, Council passed Resolution 7-18, adopting the Fiscal Year 2018-19 Budget recommended by the Budget Committee. The total of all funds in the budget

is \$7,515,618. The Resolution also imposes property taxes of \$5.8163/\$1,000 of assessed value.

Council Instructs Staff to Plan for Tree Removal at Airport Park – Based on a recommendation from the Parks Committee, Council instructed City staff to create a plan for the removal of several danger trees at Airport Park.

City to Increase Parking Enforcement at Vernonia Lake – Council agreed to begin placing flyers on vehicles parked at Vernonia Lake that do not show either a resident sticker, or proof that they have paid a day-use fee. Councilor Bruce McNair suggested the idea as a way of encouraging visitors to pay for their day-use and ensuring the City is capturing all revenue they are due for use of the park.

Library Surplus Items – Council approved Resolution 8-18, officially declaring Library property, previously approved at the May 21 meeting, as Surplus.

Police Chief Report – Police Chief Mike Conner told the Council he will be interviewing five applicants for the new School Resource Officer (SRO) position that will be shared with the Vernonia School District.

Conner said the Vernonia Police

Department has received a used Humvee vehicle at no charge to the City for use during emergencies.

Topics From the Floor – Richard Stein, representing the Vernonia Parks Committee, presented the Council with a brochure to publicize Airport Park. He suggested the City place better signage for the park on Timber Road this summer to take advantage of the two month Highway 47 detour. He also informed the Council that the Parks Committee is considering recommending a change to the name of Airport Park to something more welcoming to campers. He said the Parks Committee will be discussing the idea at their June meeting and may return to Council with suggestions in July.

Brett Costly addressed the Council on several issues. He applauded the Budget Committee and Council for creating reserve funds in the budget. He said he agreed with Mr. Stein about the idea to change the name of Airport Park to something more welcoming. He said he likes the pattern of the bricks that are being laid along Bridge Street in the downtown corridor. He thanked the City for fixing the broken water fountain on the back side of the Lake. He said he was glad to hear the City would be discussing the parking fee issues at the Lake.

County to Change Rate Structure for Permitting, Inspection Fees

Fee increases to more adequately cover cost of services

After an extensive study of Columbia County’s permitting and inspection fees found the cost of services, in many cases, were not being met, County staff recommended a number of changes to bring payments more in-line with actual costs. The Board of Commissioners has scheduled a public hearing on the matter for June 20 during its weekly meeting, which begins at 10:00 am.

The County’s Land Development Services Department charges a wide variety of fees for its building, planning, and on-site sewage permitting and inspection functions. These fees fund several needs essential to public safety, from electrical, plumbing, septic, and home occupancy permits, to road name changes, cannabis-related operating permits, and property line adjustments.

The study found that current fees charged by the County recover from 24 to 94 percent of actual costs. These costs include overall staff time as well as

the direct costs associated with the different services such as reviewing and approving applications or construction plans for compliance with applicable codes, issuing permits, and inspecting sites and construction.

“While it is essential that we cover the costs of the most common public needs,” said Todd Dugdale, Director of the Land Development Services Department, “not all fees will be increased as a result of this study.”

Dugdale noted that a variety of factors were considered when the new fee structure was set, including the public versus private benefit provided by the service.

“Some common activities that provide public benefit, such as amendments to the Comprehensive Plan map and text, zoning appeals, and hardship dwellings are more appropriately partially subsidized by the County’s general fund,” he said. “Conversely, we determined that it was more appropriate for activities with more private benefits, such as new septic lot evaluations, building construction permits, and lot partitions and subdivisions, to be supported by fee increases.”

Building fees, including those for structural, mechanical, plumbing, electrical, and manufactured housing are currently covered at 94 percent, however, with proposed staff changes, cost recovery would have decreased to 74 percent.

On-site/septic fees currently recover 49 percent of costs, but with proposed increases in staffing, cost recovery would decrease to 47 percent.

The Planning area is the most subsidized by the County’s general fund, with only 24 percent of its costs being recovered from fees charged. Proposed increases, however, would bring that to an average of about 53 percent for the most common application fee types.

A full description of current and recommended fees can be found on the County Land Development Services website by clicking on the link FY 2019 Proposed Development Fees.

The proposed fee changes for FY 2019 are to be effective on July 1, 2018.

Vernonia City Council Meetings and Closures

City Council Meetings are scheduled for 7:00 pm:
Monday, June 18, 2018
Monday, July 2, 2018

City Closures are scheduled for:
Wednesday, July 4, 2018
Independence Day

Dates and times subject to change

The Vernonia Transfer Station is scheduled to be open on the 2nd and 4th Saturday January - October 8:00 am - 2:00 pm

June 9 & 23
July 14 & 28

Dates and times are subject to change due to weather

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