

# Vernonia Candidates Questionnaire Responses *continued from page 6*

throughout the County. I would like to stay connected to the economic issues we face as a City from job development to growing the budget.

**J.R. Allen:** The City of Vernonia is currently finishing up a large sewer upgrade that will bring our treatment plant into compliance and reduce water discharge temperatures. The City is also working to develop Spencer Park. Both of these are important to the livability for everyone and this seems to be working well. My priorities if elected will always be what is best for our City. I will look to spend each tax dollar and other City funds like the valued gift that it is from you. I also think it's time to focus on the new Senior Center/Food Bank. Our Seniors and our Food Bank are valuable and deserve a new home.

**Michael Seager:** We have an effective and community minded City Administrator that lives in and knows the City well. Our Police Department is fully staffed and operating very well. Our Code Enforcement Officer has done remarkable work in helping enforce quality of life rules that help maintain our taxpayer's property values and keep Vernonia the "mountain gem" that she is. The parks are looking terrific and maintained and monitored better than ever. We have knowledgeable Committees that are very active and involved with the City. Sewer and water rates have reduced somewhat and we are hopeful for similar progress in the future.

**Dale Webb:** Vernonia has been through a lot in the last decade and a half, I believe we need to be careful before taking on any new large projects, we need a rest, but we must also move forward to maintain services to our residents. I be-

lieve our City Hall staff is working very efficiently; our water and sewer billing programs are rock solid and producing accurate data and billings for the first time in our history. It appears our new sewer upgrades are working successfully; we have several firsts in Oregon in this project. We have a water meter replacement program for the first time that will eventually lead us into lower meter reading costs and savings for ratepayers. City streets are #1 on my priority list, we need to move forward on a streets maintenance/storm drain plan that is cost effective and timely, yes we all will have to contribute some monies to achieve this, but the preliminary plan so far looks very doable.

A concern I have is how a town Vernonia's size can retain valuable staff; we many times act as larger cities training program, we need to figure out how to break this cycle or at the least mitigate it.

**5. The City is currently trying to build a new Senior Center/Vernonia Cares facility. Please explain what you know about the current situation regarding this project?**

**Rick Hobart:** The City was awarded another CDBG grant two years ago in an amount of two million dollars for construction of the new Senior Center. The lowest bid exceeded the block grant and even after other FEMA funds were paid out, after the removal of the previous center, the City has still come up short.

**Jill Hult:** Even if you are new to Vernonia, I can't imagine you have not heard our story about the devastating flood on December 03, 2007. So, most will know that flood severely affected two

critical social services; the Food Bank and the Senior Center. Fortunately, the Food Bank has been able to stay in the American Legion Hall, however, it is not the best location as it is still in a high flood risk area. The Senior Center also opened in its original location but did agree to a buy-out so a new home would need to be planned. The City and the Senior Center entered into an agreement to lease the former VCLC for operations and local restaurants stepped in to create a way to still provide Meals on Wheels to our most vulnerable citizens. It is imperative both services be relocated to a more secure and dry location so those vital services can continue and be a resource and source of comfort should another disaster ever happen rather than among the many victims of such events. A lot of work and negotiation went into securing the land for the new site which many may know will be next to the Vernonia Health Center. A CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) was acquired through the State of Oregon and a grant administrator was hired. There is a lot of preliminary work to be done for a CDBG such as environmental assessments, community input, and many, many more! Those initial requirements were completed and the City issued a RFP (request for proposals) and a few contractors responded. Unfortunately, the bids were well above our estimates. This has delayed the project a bit but we are determined to move forward and get the right contractor that will do the work within the budget.

**J.R. Allen:** The City of Vernonia lost our former Senior Center due to the flood of 2007. I have read articles in the Voice and also Council meeting minutes. The Voice article stated that the Community Development Block Grant was awarded and the 8,200 plus square feet Senior

Center/Food Bank estimated at \$2.1 million. I have read there will be non-grant costs for various construction topping \$500,000. I don't have all the details as to why things have not progressed faster. I do know the City sent out an RFQ and the low bid was more than expected. If I'm elected I feel this is the perfect area for me to really help out Vernonia. I will work hard to see this project built.

**Michael Seager:** The Vernonia Senior Center is presently building a new facility and has received all the grants and we have the plans it needs to move forward. Presently we are in the bidding process and hope to break ground on the building in the spring of 2019.

Ten (10) years ago, this City was in trouble, today it is administered professionally and with the respect of our Council and community. I would like to continue to serve my City as a volunteer and finish the work we have made in making Vernonia a better place to live and raise our children.

**Dale Webb:** I understand the current bids came in high over our funding, but that a review of the bids showed some inaccurate costs, that could get us back closer to budget. It is sounding like a call for new bids may be asked by the City. I would like to add that I take a very pragmatic view of projects like this, they all need to have very clear and sound business plans before I would like to see the City moving forward on them, this includes projects that come from solely grant funding that are turned over to the City, we must look forward to the maintenance costs of these projects into the future and how they are going to be funded. I believe it is unfair to ask the citizens for funds to maintain projects at a latter date without having those discussions up front and a plan in place.

## Know Before You Go, Hunters!

### Follow fire restrictions and closures

Oregon's most popular hunting season (centerfire deer) opened Saturday, September 29 statewide with warm, dry weather still in the forecast.

"We have had a very tough fire season with the number of human-caused wildfires well above average," says Oregon Department of Forestry's Tom Fields. "Fire danger remains high in many areas and the slightest spark still carries a great deal of potential to turn into a large fire."

Fire restrictions and closures are still in effect in some areas. It is each hunter's responsibility to know access conditions and restrictions before heading out. Here are some places to find that information:

- Oregon Department of Forestry, <https://gisapps.odf.oregon.gov/Firerestrictions/PFR.html>. Click on any area in the map to see a list of fire restrictions in areas protected by ODF. Click within public lands areas to find out the land manager and contact info.
- Corporate Closures, <http://www.ofic.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/2018-Closure-Form.pdf> (pdf) (Covers several private industrial timberlands in Oregon)
- Keep Oregon Green, <https://keeporegongreen.org/>
- US Forest Service, <https://www.fs.fed.us/>
- Bureau of Land Management, <https://www.blm.gov/oregon-washington>

[www.blm.gov/oregon-washington](https://www.blm.gov/oregon-washington)  
 • InciWeb, <https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/> (Current fires and fire-related closures in Oregon)

Here are some of the most common fire restrictions according to ODF:

- Campfires are either prohibited or only allowed in approved campgrounds in many areas.
- Exploding targets, tracer ammunition, smoking, and off-road driving (incl. motorcycles and all-terrain vehicles) are prohibited in most areas.
- Vehicles must have either a gallon of water or a fully charged and operational 2½-pound fire extinguisher and shovel (except when travelling on state highways or county roads).
- ATVs must have a charged and operational 2½-pound fire extinguisher.

Fields with Oregon Department of Forestry also notes these other fire prevention measures to keep in mind:

- Keep vehicles in good working condition. Hot particles exiting exhaust systems through faulty catalytic converters can ignite multiple fires along roadways.
- When towing, keep chains from dragging and generating sparks.
- Where campfires are allowed (approved campgrounds), be sure to fully extinguish the fire before leaving or going to bed.
- In lieu of campfires, use portable cooking stoves that use liquefied fuels (check local restrictions).

## Support our Seniors SOS DONATION

Vernonia Senior Citizens  
 939 Bridge Street, Vernonia, OR 97064  
 Office Telephone 503-429-3912  
 501 (c) (3) TID: #23-7422295

Donor's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is my \$60 donation towards the Senior Meal Program (Sponsors one monthly meal pack containing 10 meal certificates)

Enclosed is my donation towards two meal packs (\$120)

Here is my donation for another amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\$15/year annual senior citizen membership for those 60 yrs old and over

You have my permission to list me as a Champion of the SOS program (amount will not be posted)

My check will serve as my receipt OR

I would like a tax deductible receipt mailed to me at the above address

THANK YOU FOR BECOMING AN SOS CHAMPION!