

Vernonia City News...

At the January 22, 2019 City Council Meeting:

Council Approves Budget Calendar

– Council voted to appoint City Administrator Josette Mitchell as the Budget Officer for Fiscal Year 2019-20. The Council also voted to approve the Budget Calendar for the upcoming Budget Process – Budget Meetings are scheduled for April 9, April 16, April 30, May 7, and May 14, if needed. Adoption of the Budget is scheduled for June 17. Finance Director Angie Handegard said the committee has two openings for citizen members.

Council Approves Letter Concerning Scenic River Designation

– Council approved a letter to Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, containing their comments and concerns in regards to the proposed designation of a 17 mile stretch of the Nehalem River below Vernonia as a Scenic Waterway. (See full story on front page.)

Hult to Remain on Tourism Committee

– City Administrator Josette Mitchell asked Council to allow former City Councilor Jill Hult to continue to serve on the Columbia County Tourism Steering Committee and report back to the City Council. Mitchell said most city representatives are from members of their City Council. Hult took the position as a City Councilor, but was not elected this past November. The Committee requested she continue to serve, and Council approved the request, with Councilor Bruce McNair thanking Hult for her willingness to serve.

Council Approves Library Food for Fines Program

– Library Director

Shannon Romtvedt asked the Council to approve the annual program for February 19-28 which allows library patrons to pay-off fines with food donations for Vernonia Cares. Romtvedt said in 2017 the program cleared \$126 in fines with 126 food items and also collected \$30 in cash donations for Vernonia Cares. Last year the program worked with the School District and raised \$260 and collected 393 food items. Council approved the program for this year.

Council Receives Reports – Council reviewed the monthly Department Report containing updates on Library, Public Works, and building maintenance projects, and also reviewed the Quarterly Finance Report.

Mayor's Report – Mayor Rick Hobart said he spoke with management for Columbia County Rider, who told him that the public transportation service is planning to end the regular 3-day-a-week service from Vernonia to Washington County and replace it with a demand-response service. The new service will require making an appointment and will still be available on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

Hobart said the City is updating their website, which should be running in about a month, and will be a good tool for citizens.

Police Department Report – Chief Mike Conner said Officer Michael Walter has graduated from Police Academy, and said Walter, along with new officer Abby Hanson, are both continuing their training in Vernonia. Conner told the Council the best and quickest way to contact the Department is to call the dispatch number.

City Administrator Report – City Administrator Josette Mitchell told the Council the architectural and engineering revisions to the Senior Center/Food Bank building will cost approximately \$24,000. She said the plan is to go out to bid for construction by the end of February.

Mitchell reported that the City was required by HB 2017, the state transportation funding bill, to rate identified collector streets. State Avenue was the only identified collector in Vernonia. The City has submitted a report which could lead to funding from the state for upgrades.

Mitchell told the Council she is working with the Parks Committee to develop a grant application for funding for Spencer Park from Oregon Parks and Recreation Department.

Council Schedules Workshops – Council rescheduled a workshop to discuss the house the City owns at the Memorial Cemetery to February 4, 2019 at 6:00 pm prior to their regular Council meeting. Council also requested that staff research potential facilitators for a Council retreat. They said after the retreat they would schedule a joint workshop with the Parks Committee.

Topics From the Floor – Gretchen Lindauer told the Council she and her husband Terry were assured by City staff prior to purchasing a home at Nickerson Ridge Estates that they would be able to build a shop on their property. They have been unable to build due to a legal conflict between the City and the developer. Lindauer said the conflict has been on going for four and a half years, and said both the City and the developer are at fault. She asked the City to make a decision and allow her to finish her property.

Council Meets in Executive Session – Council met in an Executive Session under ORS 192.660 (2) (h) "To consult with counsel concerning the legal rights and duties of a public body with regard to current litigation or litigation likely to be filed." Council took no action when they returned to open session.

At the February 4, 2019 City Council Meeting:

Council Holds Workshop to Discuss Cemetery House

– Council met in a workshop at 6:00 pm, prior to their regular meeting, to discuss options for selling the house and property owned by the City adjacent to the Memorial Cemetery. Following the discussion Council instructed City Administrator Josette Mitchell to move forward with preparing for the sale.

Council Hears Update on Streets Inventory

– Ben Fousek from the City Planning Department provided the Council with a detailed update on the current condition of the City's streets inventory in preparation for a future workshop. Fousek used a series of maps to identify streets in poor, marginal, fair, good, and excellent condition.

Mayors Report – Mayor Rick Hobart told the Council and audience he attended a hearing concerning changes to the Columbia Country Rider transportation system. He said the County Commissioners agreed to change the service offered in Vernonia, noting there will no longer be regular trips to the Willow Creek station in Hillsboro from Vernonia. He said instead there will be an on-demand van in Vernonia on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday which riders can

continued on page 12

Judge Dismisses Building Permit Case Against City

The attorney representing the City of Vernonia has received a letter from Judge Ted Grove, Columbia County Circuit Judge, notifying him that Grove is dismissing the case against the City brought by Robert Smejkal and Terry Goodrich.

Grove stated the case, filed on July 31, 2018, concerned the City's denial of a building permit at Nickerson Ridge Estates. Grove said the case is a land use decision. He said he did not intend to award any attorney's fees or costs to either party.

The case will now go to the Oregon Land Use Board of Appeals (LUBA).

Smejkal and the City of Vernonia have been in a long running disagreement over homes already built in the development.

The letter was released by the City at the February 4, 2018 City Council meeting. During the review of the letter City Administrator Josette Mitchell said the City has spent over \$133,000 on the case.

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

**February 9 & 23
March 9 & 23**

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:
Tuesday, February 19, 2019

City Closures are scheduled for:
Monday, February 18, 2019
Presidents' Day Holiday

Dates and times subject to change

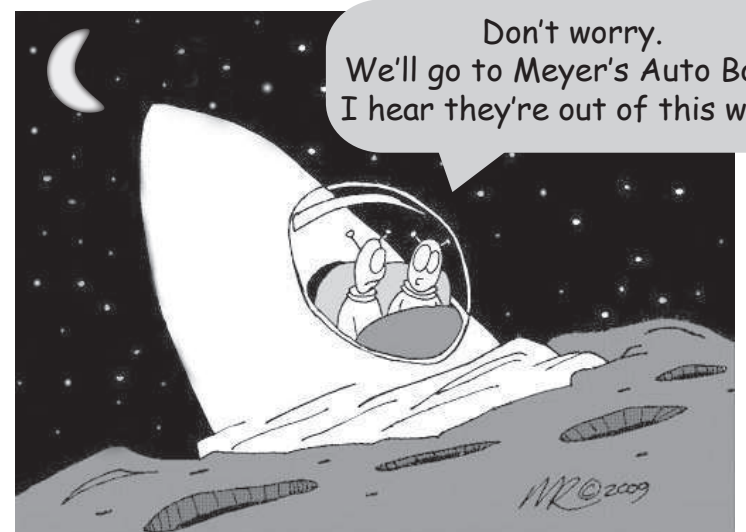


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