

Vernonia City News...

At the January 4, 2021 City Council Meeting:

New Councilors and Mayor Sworn In – Before the start of the meeting City Recorder Stephanie Borst administered the Oath of Office to re-elected Mayor Rick Hobart and newly elected Councilors Lorna Poetter and Grant Williams.

Council Approves Parking Ordinance – Council voted 4-0 to approve Ordinance 927 which amends current code and removes any parking requirements for businesses that front Bridge Street and Rose Avenue in the downtown zone. (Councilor Grant Williams recused himself from the discussion and vote because he owns a property in the downtown zone.) Current city code required the property owner to provide off-street parking within the footprint

of their property. Under the new ordinance, any new building constructed larger than 3,000 square feet would be required to provide parking for employees. Businesses could pay a fee and avoid having to provide parking. The ordinance takes effect 30 days from approval.

Council Approves Liquor License for Islands Grill – Council voted unanimously to approve a Liquor License Application request for Islands Grill, a restaurant located on Bridge Street.

Allen Appointed Council President – The Council voted to appoint Councilor J.R. Allen as the Council President. The Council President performs the duties of the Mayor if the Mayor is absent from a Council meeting or is unable to function as the Mayor.

Council Approves Phase 3 Tree Planting in Spencer Park – Council approved a recommendation from the Parks Committee to add seven more memorial trees at Spencer Park. All three phases of the project have been organized by Steve Whiteman, who also maintains them. Trees are paid for by citizens. Councilors J.R. Allen and Grant Williams both volunteered to purchase trees for the program.

Council Appoints Committee Liaisons – The Council appointed liaisons to the following City committees and boards:

Library Board – Lorna Poetter
Senior Liaison – Rick Hobart
Public Works Committee – Dale Webb
Parks Committee – Grant Williams
Cemetery Committee – J.R. Allen
Airport Committee – Grant Williams

Mayor Appoints Calhoun to Public Works Committee – With approval from the rest of the City Council, Mayor Rick Hobart appointed Michael Calhoun to serve on the Public Works Committee.

City Administrator Report – City Administrator Josette Mitchell told the Council the bid to cut the trees in Ora Bolmeir Park was awarded to Mike Pihl Logging, with work scheduled to begin January 11.

Mitchell told the Council the City has received a COVID stimulus grant for \$61,000 which will cover the costs the City expended for the police officer who would have been working for the Vernonia School District as a School Resource Officer, but has not worked there while school was closed; the officer position is shared between the City and School District.

Resident Charged in Vernonia Arson / Vehicle Theft

On December 25, 2020, at approximately 8:08 pm, officers from the Vernonia Police Department and the Vernonia Rural Fire Protection District were dispatched to a structure fire located at 924 2nd Avenue in Vernonia.

he trespassed at a residence on Reeder Rd. Near the location Hucke was located, a vehicle belonging to a Vernonia firefighter was also found. The vehicle was burned and destroyed.

Hucke was subsequently arrested

in the First Degree, Reckless Burning, Criminal Mischief in the First Degree, and Unauthorized Use of a Vehicle. Hucke's next court appearance is scheduled for January 11, 2021. His bail has been set at \$198,750 and he remains in custody.

This case has been investigated by the Vernonia Police Department, the Columbia County Sheriff's Office, and the Oregon State Police. The cause of the fire remains under investigation by the Oregon Fire Marshal.

Council Schedules Work Sessions

– Council scheduled a work session for Wednesday, January 13 at 6:00 pm to discuss the sidewalk section of city development code and the possibility of making changes to the Waiver of Remonstrance process that has allowed property developers to avoid installing infrastructure at the time of construction.

Council also scheduled a work session for Wednesday, February 10 at 6:00 pm to review reserve accounts.



Upon their arrival, it was determined that the residents were not inside. It was also determined that one of the residents, Timothy R. Hucke left the area prior to the arrival of law enforcement and fire personnel, and is suspected of starting the fire.

On December 26, 2020 Hucke was located in Multnomah County after

ed by the Vernonia Police Department and was transported and lodged at the Columbia County Jail.

On the morning of December 29, the Columbia County District Attorney's Office presented the case to a grand jury. The grand jury returned an 11-count indictment against Mr. Hucke that included multiple charges of Arson



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