

Vernonia City News...

At the April 19, 2021 City Council Meeting:

Citizen of the Month – Mayor Rick Hobart recognized George Tice, as the Citizen of the Month for April. Tice was nominated by Councilor Dale Webb for his work with the Vernonia Lions Club, and with the City’s Public Works and Budget committees. He also helped start the Drug Coalition and was an early advocate for a local skate park.

Council Approves Title 9 Revisions – After spending over 2.5 hours at their April 5 Council meeting reviewing proposed revisions to the City’s Title 9 Code which covers land development and public improvements, the City Council was expected to approve their requested revisions at this meeting, but Councilor J.R. Allen expressed concerns that the changes take away authority from the local Planning Commission and constituted a “state takeover” that would make it too difficult for citizens to build in the community because of bureaucracy. The Councilors and Mayor reminded Allen that the Council was only being asked to approve the changes they had recommended at their last meeting, although Councilors Grant Williams and Lorna Poetter admitted they had not read the entire document with the requested revisions. City Administrator Josette Mitchell, City Planner Matt Straite, and City Recorder Stephanie Borst attempted to address Allen’s concerns and pointed out that many of the changes were already in City development ordinances and the changes were being added to the Title 9 Code to put all the information in one place. After over another hour of discussion, the Council eventually voted 3-1 to approve Ordinance 932 which amends the Title 9 code, with Councilor Allen voting no, and Councilor Poetter abstaining.

Council Approves Waivers of Remonstrance – Council voted 5-0 to approve four Waivers of Remonstrance, requested by Andrew Perdew, which allows an exemption to sidewalk requirements at 174 East G Street, 115 East H Street, 143 East H Street, and 157 East H Street.

Council Clarifies CDBG Requirements – Council voted 5-0 to approve Resolution 2021-08, which gives the City Administrator authority to execute documents related to any Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) projects the City undertakes. Funding for CDBG projects comes from the federal government and the City has utilized those funds for development of the Senior Center/Vernonia Cares proj-

ect and is currently seeking funding to expand water and sewer service for new development.

City Administrator Report – City Administrator Josette Mitchell told the Council all the phase 3 memorial trees for Spencer Park have been delivered and memorial plaques have been installed for those trees where they were requested. Mitchell told the Council the City has received 10 6-7 foot western red cedar trees that will be planted at Ora Bolmeir Park to begin the replacement of the Douglas fir trees which were diseased and removed this winter.

Mitchell said the project to install signs for the C-Z Trailhead is continuing to move forward.

Mitchell told the Council she testified before the State Ways and Means Committee, requesting funding through the American Recovery Plan Act for funding to expand infrastructure on Louisiana Avenue North/South connection, which Representative Brad Witt is endorsing as use of the funds in small rural communities for one time infrastructure improvements. Mitchell said Oregon has \$708 million to distribute to communities across the state.

At the May 3 City Council Meeting:

Poetter Resigns From Council – Mayor Rick Hobart announced that City Councilor Lorna Poetter has resigned her position. Poetter is no longer a resident of the City of Vernonia and is not eligible to serve on the City Council. Council will discuss appointing a replacement at their May 17 meeting. (See full story on this page.)

Council Approves Reserve Fund Policy – After discussing this item and then tabling a decision at their April 19 meeting, Council voted to approve Resolution 2021-09 which set policy to oversee Operating Reserve Funds for Water and Sewer which can be used to supplement the operating budgets in the case of a shortfall, and Facilities Reserve Funds for Water, Sewer, General, Parks, Cemetery for major improvements, repairs, maintenance, or unanticipated revenue shortfalls.

Council Discusses Changes to Sidewalk Code – Council made no decision after discussing a change to the current City development code that would require the owner of any property not having sidewalks to install and pay for

sidewalks as a condition for the issuance of a building permit for new construction and occupation. A fee-in-lieu may be substituted for sidewalk construction when the new construction is replacing another residential unit that has the same or smaller footprint, or in extreme circumstances when construction of a sidewalk is not possible due to slopes over 25% or within wetlands. Once Council approves the final language these changes will need to go before the Planning Commission before it takes effect.

Council Approves Waivers of Remonstrance – Council voted 4-0 to approve two Waivers of Remonstrance, requested by Andrew Perdew, which allows an exemption to sidewalk requirements at 146 East G Street, and 188 East G Street.

City Administrator Report – City Administrator Josette Mitchell told the Council the City has been awarded a Travel Oregon Grant which will pay for downtown improvements that include hanging baskets, murals, new garbage receptacles, paver resetting, and more.

Mitchell told the Council the interior of City Hall was painted by city staff and new carpet has been installed.

Topics From the Floor - Dorothea Jirka and Doug Walker, representing Home-town Heroes who support local National Guard and other service members in Columbia County, requested permission to hang a banner somewhere in the City of Vernonia during the month of May in honor of Memorial Day. Council agreed to place the banner if an appropriate place could be found.

Poetter Resigns From City Council

At their May 3, 2021 meeting, Mayor Rick Hobart informed the other three City Council members that Councilor Lorna Poetter has resigned from her seat on the Council, just four months after taking the oath of office. Hobart thanked Poetter for her service to the community during her time on the Council.

Poetter recently sold her residence which was inside City limits and has moved outside the City boundary, making her ineligible to serve on the Council.

Poetter received the most votes of any of the four candidates running for two Council seats in the November 2020 election. She and Grant Williams unseated incumbents Susan Wagner and Bruce McNair in that election.

The City Charter calls for a vacancy on the Council to be filled by appointment by a majority of the remaining Council members. Mayor Hobart said he expects the Council to discuss that process at their May 17 meeting.

Black Tie & Blue Jeans Summer Fundraiser Postposed

The bi-annual Black Tie & Blue Jeans summer fundraiser will be skipping this year and will now be held on even number years with the next event being held in August of 2022. Organizers cite the COVID pandemic for the change. Planning for the event begins nearly a year in advance and the lockdown has encumbered those efforts. The organization still intends to award scholarships this year using reserve funds and private donations.

Marion Christensen, Columbia Learning Center Board Chair said, “Since the last Black Tie & Blue Jeans in 2019, our organization has presented

25 Chance to Become Scholarships to Columbia County students totaling \$125,000.” The \$5,000 scholarship can be used by students at an accredited college or trade school. Since its inception in 2000, the Columbia Learning Center has awarded 264 Scholarships totaling \$1,320,000 to graduating seniors from all five Columbia County High Schools!

The Chance to Become scholarship is aimed at students who would most likely not apply or be eligible for typical scholarships for a variety of reasons. It may be awarded

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Vernonia Police Blotter April 13-30, 2021

Reports Taken/Arrests

- April 17, 2021 Informational report taken
- April 23, 2021 Arrest on a Warrant near Bridge Street.
- April 26, 2021 Report of a Death Investigation.
- April 26, 2021 Arrest on a Warrant and cited for Driving While Suspended, Driving Uninsured, and an Obscured Plate near HWY 47 South
- April 28, 2021 Arrest on a Warrant near Bridge Street.

Citations/Other

- April 16, 2021 Cited for Careless Driving

and Driving Uninsured near Knott Street

- April 17, 2021 Cited for Driving While Suspended and Failure to Carry Proof of Insurance near Jefferson Avenue
- April 18, 2021 Cited for Speeding 78/55 mph near HWY 47 South
- April 25, 2021 Cited for Driving Uninsured and Speeding 70/55 mph near HWY 47 South.

Vernonia Police Department responds to calls that do not always end in Arrest, Report, or Citation. 04/01/2021 through 04/30/2021 VPD had 169 calls for service.

Vernonia City Council Meetings and Closures

Please check the City’s website for details on upcoming City Council Meetings scheduled for 7:00 pm:

Monday, May 17, 2021
Monday, June 7, 2021

www.vernonia-or.gov

City Closures are scheduled for:
Monday, May 31, 2021

Memorial Day

Dates and times subject to change

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

**May 8 & 22
June 12 & 26**

There may be limits on oversized items (mattresses, couches, etc.) and the number of vehicles in the yard at one time.

Dates are subject to change