

City Parks Projects Move Forward

The City of Vernonia has been busy this spring with several projects in city parks.

Six foot tall western red cedar trees have been planted in Ora Bolmeir Park, the start of a replanting project to replace the diseased Douglas fir trees that were removed this past winter. Later this year the City will plant a mix of deciduous trees, including Oregon ash and Pacific madrone, along with Doug fir seedlings in the upper section of the park.

ting an upgrade with new signage this summer. The old signage was badly in need of replacement, and City staff members Ben Fousek and Angie Handegard (pictured below) have created a new look for the park signs, which incorporates the new City logo, along with simplified rules and rates. The signage is now in place at Anderson Park; the rest of the parks will have the new signs installed over the next several months.



City workers cut down four hazardous cottonwood trees in Hawkins Park during the week of May 10, with assistance from Mike Pihl Logging. Two years ago one of the trees fell unexpectedly on the Saturday morning before the annual Logging Show was scheduled, damaging a vehicle that was on-site setting up for the show, prompting the City to hire an arborist to examine the health of the trees. The recommendation was to remove the rest of the trees. The City is currently consulting with the Upper Nehalem Watershed Council and the Columbia County Soil and Water Conservation District for help in replanting and possibly developing a restoration plan.

All of Vernonia's City parks are get-

Other parks projects the City has recently completed include the repair of leaks in the play shed roof at Spencer Park, and the clearing of fishing spots at Vernonia Lake, which utilized volunteers from the Oregon Bass and Panfish Club.

The City will be accepting proposals for construction of the Vernonia SK8 Park project at Spencer Park in the coming weeks.

10 more memorial trees were planted at Spencer Park, and memorial plaques have been added for some of the trees. If you have placed a tree in the park and would like to add a plaque please contact City Hall at 1001 Bridge Street, (503) 429-5291.

Mist-Birkenfeld RFPD Learn Large Animal Rescue Techniques

14 staff and volunteers go through certified training to assist horses and other animals in trouble

By Scott Laird

The folks at the Mist-Birkenfeld Rural Fire Protection District (RFPD) have been developing some innovative programs recently, including their Community Health Integrated Paramedicine Program (CHIPP) and recent rural COVID vaccination clinics. Now they can add a Large Animal Rescue program to that list.



Large Animal Rescue trainer Deb Fox watches trainees during hands-on practice.

"We get called out on all kinds of emergency calls, not just fires and EMS calls," says Mist-Birk RFPD staff paramedic Larry Boxman. "Of course we do rescue work and we have people who are certified as rope technicians for rescues, but we also get called to get both small and large animals out of various predicaments, whether in the mud or creeks, or getting a cat out of a crawl space. We get called for everything because we're the only agency around."

May 14-16 14 Mist-Birk RFPD volunteers and staff spent the weekend with John and Deb Fox, owners and primary trainers of the Large Animal Rescue Company from Arizona, learning the challenges and techniques for assisting horses and other large animals in distress.

Boxman says Jon and Deb Fox came highly recommended. "They teach all over the country and are probably the best in the field," says Boxman.

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Investigative Report Clears Witt in Sexual Harassment Complaint

House Committee on Conduct will review the report and decide if action is needed

A report filed by the investigator assigned to review the sexual harassment complaint filed against Oregon State Representative Brad Witt, (D-Clatskanie), has found that both the complainants concerns and Witt's explanation are credible.

In a report filed on May 19, 2021 to the Legislative Equity Office, investigator Sarah J. Ryan found that Representative Vikki Breese Iverson's (R-Prineville) interpretation as sexual harassment of an awkward text exchange between her and Witt was not unreasonable.

Breese Iverson filed the complaint against Witt, believing he wanted to exchange his vote on a bill

Breese Iverson was bringing forward in exchange for a date or some kind of sexual relationship.

Ryan's investigation found Witt's explanation of his comments in the text exchange as "believable."

Ryan works for the law firm of Jackson Lewis P.C. which was hired to conduct the investigation. The investigation's conclusions were scheduled to be heard by the House Committee on Conduct on June 1, which will decide if any further action should be taken.

Witt and Breese Iverson work together on three committees in the state legislature, including the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee which Witt chairs and Breese Iverson is a Vice Chair. Witt temporarily stepped down as the chair while the investigation was being conducted.

The text exchange, which occurred on April 12, was released as part of the investigative report. In the exchange Breese Iverson asks Witt if he will support her "reservoir bill," HB 2616. Witt explains that his previous work on watershed issues would not allow him to vote yes on the bill. After some discussion about the details of the bill, Witt texts, "We probably need to go for a beer sometime". Breese Iverson responds with more details about the bill, and Witt texts, "I'm not wedded to beer by any means. Could be dinner or....? "Or what?" asks Breese Iverson. Witt responded, "I've made two offerings. If you wanna meet, find something better than dinner or beer." "Trying to get a vote count" is the final text from Breese Iverson.

According to Ryan's report,

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