

Tourism tops development

Tourism has the greatest potential for aiding economic recovery in this part of Columbia County said participants of the Columbia 2000 town hall meeting in Vernonia on June 16.

Approximately 40 area residents attended the meeting sponsored by the newly formed Columbia County Economic Development Council, to help develop what will eventually be a county-wide proposal for inclusion in the Oregon Comeback program promoted by Governor Neil Goldschmidt.

Road and park improvements were included in the work needed to make tourism successful, and the group also agreed on the need for overnight lodging. Development of small wood products manufacturing companies and promotion of more arts and crafts related businesses were also suggested.

After the introduction by Ernie McDonald, a retired forester who now works with the Oregon Business Council as a Portland General Electric representative, the audience broke up into 5 small groups to develop their own ideas, but each group made basically the same recommendations. Improved sewer and water services, airport improvements, a retirement center, and the need to publicize the natural advantages of the area were common themes in the small groups.

When all of the communities in Columbia County have held similar meetings, the results will be evaluated and a proposal will be developed and sent to Salem for inclusion with other proposals for economic development funds.

"The governor doesn't want any region smaller than a county" to be included in the Oregon Comeback plan, said CCEDC President Paul Pulliam of St. Helens.

Mike Wetter, from the State Department of Economic Development, agreed with Pulliam's assessment and added that the program is being developed so county-wide groups can work together to best utilize the limited funds available.

Wetter introduced himself by saying, "I'm your assigned bureaucrat," and pointed out that if work continues on the

proposed linear park from Banks to Vernonia, it could result in a joint Columbia-Washington County proposal.

In a few days Wetter will become one of the half-dozen Regional Development Officers in the state, and in conversation with The INDEPENDENT following the town hall he acknowledged

that community meetings won't solve all of the problems, but, he said, they will help to "jump start" the economy.

Patricia Ray and Mario Leonetti are Vernonia representatives on the CCEDC, but anyone interested in working with the group may also join.

Business Notes



Sentry Market owners Chuck Hendryx, standing at left, and Gordon Smith presented Jo Hall with the Amana microwave oven she won during the market's recent festivities. Bill Jaques, kneeling in front, won the employee trip to Hawaii.

SENTRY MARKET

Peggy Brunsman was the big winner in Vernonia Sentry Market's recent giveaway promotion, with the winning ticket for a trip to Hawaii for two people.

Other prize winners, and their prizes, in the activity marking the local market's association with Sentry Markets were: Jo Hall, Amana microwave oven; Margaret Helmholtz, Frigidaire freezer; Colleen McLimans, 10 speed bike; Marta Dotter, Magnavox AM/FM radio; Wayne Lubbes, 2-man tent; Alan Hein, 2-man raft; James Sears, 1-year supply of Wonder bread; Rick Andrus, 1-year supply of Franz bread; Don Dennis, 1-year supply of Lynden Farms chickens; Cherie Califf, 1-year supply of Quality Check ice cream; Patti Jensen, 1-year supply of RC Cola; Deanne Ricks, Budweiser air mattress.

In addition to customers' prizes, another Hawaii trip was won by Bill Jaques in a

contest open only to market employees.

VERNONIA HOTEL

The Vernonia Hotel has been sold to Rick Taxe of Los Angeles, according to James "Duffy" Shafer, the resident manager.

The hotel is being prepared for overnight lodging rather than as a residential hotel, Shafer said. He hopes to have it ready for such occupancy by Jamboree time.

Prize winners are announced

Winners of the prizes awarded by the Vernonia Area Chamber of Commerce in their recent raffle were Noni Andersen, who won the Sears freezer; Bill Etzold, the gas barbecue from Western Auto; W. G. Smith, \$300 worth of groceries from Sentry Market; Lynda Jones, \$100 of gas from Riley's Service.

All of the winners are from Vernonia except Smith, who is from Aloha.



Dirk Andersen, right, president of the Columbia County Chambers Association, presents a check for \$1,035, to Paul Pulliam and Patricia Ray of the Columbia County Economic Development Council. The CCCA disbanded in favor of supporting the efforts of the new organization and presented the money remaining in their treasury to CCEDC.

Bank and insurer reach settlement on loss claim

Farmers and Merchants Bank of Forest Grove has reached a definitive settlement agreement with the Federal Insurance Company, a New Jersey Corporation. The agreement which calls for a payment of \$930,000 to the bank, was negotiated as a result of a claim on an Officers and Directors Liability Insurance policy which the bank acquired in the normal course of business several years earlier. Certain attorneys' fees will also be paid by the insurer.

The claim, which was filed in December, 1986 was based on large loan losses suffered by the bank beginning in 1985. The losses were blamed on alleged poor lending practices.

Federal Insurance Company, the bank and every other party to this action wishes to make it clear that the settlement does not, in any way, constitute an admission of liability on the part of any party. In addition, the settlement should not be construed as lending any validity to any of the claims.

The \$930,000 will be used to provide capital for the bank and to allow for the write down of a few remaining poor quality loans.

Farmers & Merchants Bank has become the only independently owned and operated bank in its trade area since U.S. National Bank acquired Valley National Bank earlier this year.

Board Chairman Roy E. Baker said of the settlement, "These funds will allow the bank to continue to offer community banking services at a time when other banks are moving in the opposite direction. Farmers & Merchants Bank was chartered to serve it's community and is striving to continue that commitment."

Garage sales now regulated by ordinance

In response to proliferating garage sales, some of them seeming to continue week after week, the City of Vernonia has adopted an ordinance that prohibits more than two such sales within 12 months at any one location. The duration of the sales is also regulated, with a limit of three days, or 72 consecutive hours for each sale.

In addition, any individual or organization wanting to conduct a garage sale must first obtain a permit from the office of the City Recorder. There is no fee for the permit, as its purpose is to eliminate commercialism of garage sales, not to increase city revenues.

Violation of the ordinance, however, is punishable by a fine of up to \$30.

Remember Jamboree T-Shirts are on sale.