

# Happy Holidays

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## The INDEPENDENT

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"Voice of the Upper Nehalem River Valley"

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### Santa Claus visits . . .



Zachary, Jo-Beth and Talon Murray enjoyed Santa's comfortable lap long enough to tell him what they want for Christmas.

### Group files appeal of Banks decision

Spontaneous applause for outgoing Mayor Howard Steinbach's gracious statements, and for his 20 years of service to the community, ended the occasionally raucous Dec. 13 meeting of the Banks City Council.

Several members of Coalition for Responsible Growth, Inc. (CRG), a citizens group which has appealed to the Land Use Board of Appeals to rescind approval by the City of Banks for a residential subdivision called the South Banks development, attended the meeting.

The appeal is based on the absence of a formal planning commission and what CRG considers inadequate public hearings. The group contends that dissolution of the city's planning commission in 1992 was a violation of its Comprehensive Plan and that, without a planning commission, there was a "lack of meaningful community input as the project was being planned."

CRG President Jim Pursley told *The INDEPENDENT* "It's almost the 11th Commandment: 'Thou shalt have a planning commission,' so the appeal was made to LUBA as the guardian of process."

The development would add approximately 250 residences, effectively doubling the population of the city.

If the appeal is successful, the project will go back to the public hearing phase and re-hearings will be handled by a new mayor and a council with

two new members. Mayor-elect Tim Crippen has said he plans to reinstate the planning commission.

Byron Perry, representing Aho Construction, which would do the actual construction, showed a video filmed by Channel 2 television that used Aho developments in the Vancouver, Wash., area as good examples of affordable housing. Perry also proposed a change in the previously approved plan that would eliminate "tot lots" and enlarge a park that is adjacent to a wetland area in the development.

Mel Aho, who operates Aho Construction with his brother, explained their plans to build affordable housing by using smaller lots, but building in ways that allow back yards approximately 20' x 60' for family activities. The houses, Aho said, would sell in the \$75,000 - \$85,000 range.

Councilors Norma Stewart and Bob Orlosky both indicated they wanted more expensive housing that would be purchased by people with higher incomes, because they felt such residents would be more willing to approve a police department levy. Banks currently has no police department although there is an office of the Oregon State Police.

Aho responded that, since only one-percent of the entire population has an income greater than \$100,000 per year, there would be far more families who would be able to

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### Filing open for district elections

Filing is now open for special district elections, including Vernonia, Banks and Jewell School Districts, Vernonia, Mist-Birkenfeld, Tri-City and Elsie-Vinemaple Rural Fire Protection Districts, and Columbia County Emergency

Communications District (9-1-1).

The close of filing will be January 26 at 5:00 p.m. in each county's Elections Department. Candidates may file nomination papers in one of two ways: With a petition

signed by 25 registered voters of the district, or by paying a \$10 filing fee.

Ballots for the March 28 mail election will be delivered in early March.

Although voters in November approved merging the Vernonia city and rural fire departments, only voters in the rural district will be eligible to vote for rural district directors in March because the merger doesn't take effect until July 1, 1995.

Following are the positions  
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### Vernonia Cares food drive results

The first annual Vernonia Cares Weekend Food Drive, Dec. 10-11, brought in 2,350 pounds of food and \$1,281 in cash from bottle and can de-

posit refunds and donations.

As of Dec. 17, Vernonia Cares was planning to provide Christmas baskets for 52 families totaling 226 people.

### Vernonia seeks one police officer

The Vernonia City Council this month gave Police Chief Jim Walters approval to apply for funding for one police officer through the federal COPS grant program. Walters wanted to apply for enough funding for two officers but only one was approved because, even with the grant, financial obligations to the city would total \$160,000 over a three-year period for two additional

officers.

Two Corey Hill residents, Jeff Patterson and Shirley Daughtrey, expressed concern about residents of another household using a .22 caliber rifle in a careless manner. They asked the council to review city ordinances regarding the use of guns in the city.

The Council adopted an  
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