

Between the Bookends

By Nancy Burch
Vernonia City Librarian

The citizens of Vernonia are presently involved in making some very important decisions concerning the direction they would like Vernonia to take in regard to their city and the services they wish to receive from it. Those who have been reading *The INDEPENDENT*, attending the council meetings, or just hearing talk around town, have heard that plans are taking shape for a new multipurpose/municipal building for Vernonia. Every effort is being made to provide answers to all possible questions concerning this facility. Since the library will be an important part of this building and since library patrons will benefit directly, I am hoping that these people will be vocal in their support for this much-needed facility. These are the people who have seen the conditions under which we function...no display areas, no work space for staff, no areas for quiet study or reading, no space for a permanent circulation desk, no separate space for computer work stations, no space for children's programs, and no storage for supplies or unprocessed books. Because of other, necessary city uses of the library, hours of operation are limited.

These are just the day-to-day conditions under which we, in the library, operate. The building itself has a flat roof that gathers water and deposits it periodically in the library, a wall in the back of the building that has been condemned, outdated wiring, no method of circulating air in the summer, and no hot water in the leaky, unisex restroom. The building does not meet ADA standards.

The other city departments all operate under similar substandard conditions in this building that was designed as a Safeway store in the 1930's.

For ten years the City of Vernonia has been working toward a new building. Recently, new impetus has been given to the project, which would include the library, police department, city offices, public meeting room, municipal court, and a Visitor Information Center operated by the Chamber of Commerce. A site has been agreed upon and obtained, a preliminary design for the building has been presented, and a financing program is under investigation.

You are welcome to view these proposed plans, to ask questions about probable financing, to see the condition of the present building, to ask any questions you may have, and to offer input regarding ideas for improved library services or for programs you think should be implemented.

Your support is needed for this project to become a reality because it will be **your** building, serve **you** and be a constant reminder that Vernonia is proud of its past, living in the present, and planning for its future.

(Of course, if you have a million or so dollars to contribute, it would be gratefully accepted.)

Vernonia Library is located at 919 Bridge Street. **Library Hours:** Monday and Friday 1-5 p.m., Wednesday 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m.-2 p.m. **Preschool Story Time:** Wednesdays, 10:30-11 a.m. Call 429-1818 for information.

Ike Says

By Dale Webb, member
Izaak Walton League, Nehalem Valley Chapter

(Ed. Note: This article was written prior to the recent Federal decision to approve Gov. Kitzhaber's Coastal Salmon Initiative, but could not be published at that time.)

By the time you read this article, we will either have a Federally listed species in our local streams or the Governor's Coastal Salmon Initiative will be approved. I have very mixed emotions about which will be in the Coho salmon's best interest. Listing the Coho will most likely result in a tangle of red tape for any project that can be demonstrated to impact the salmon. This same red tape will result in the slow-down of fish enhancement projects. Not listing the Coho salmon will allow activities that are still damaging the fish's habitat. The Governor's initiative relies too heavily on voluntary compliance; in the past this has been abused and will most likely continue to be so. In the real world, money talks.

A case in point is the destruction of habitat in the North fork of Wolf Creek, a tributary of the Nehalem River. After a hard rain in late March, my father and I noticed that the Nehalem did not clear up as soon as it should have. Realizing something was wrong, I decided to start checking upstream. Dad said he thought somebody was logging up the North fork of Wolf Creek. Sure enough, the North fork was slightly discolored and a look at the tracks coming off Wolf Creek road onto Hwy. 26 said there was a logging operation going on upstream. Driving up Wolf Creek road, I soon realized I had found the culprit — the road had become a muddy quagmire. If you have ever driven on a State Forest road you know that the crushed rock is usually so thick that, if you drive off the shoulder of the road, you can hardly get back on. The road I was looking at had been totally destroyed. Every culvert crossing had a load of ballast rock (this is bigger than pit run) dumped on it. In many places

the road had actually been pushed below grade by the weight of the log trucks and, of course, the road was a muddy mess. When it rained, the mud flowed off the road, down the ditch into small tributaries, then into Wolf Creek. I have pictures of this, so I won't have to be verbally abused by a state employee who questions these statements. To me, this was in total disregard of the Governor's initiative and it was allowed by the government agency that the Governor is relying on to rein in forestry practices that are harming the Coho habitat. When asked how this damage had occurred, the state forestry official in charge said that it was "a judgment call" and that they are "still learning." Well, sorry fellas, the time for learning is over! How many years of experience does it take to see that a road is going to hell! The private timber company that bought this sale is just as culpable. They should have stopped hauling, but no, they were near completion of the sale so they tried to finish, to the detriment of the road and the salmon. So much for voluntary compliance! To top this off, Wolf Creek is recognized as a key watershed for Coho in the Governor's Initiative. I wonder how State Forestry treats streams that aren't given this special recognition.

The timber industry's proposal to help fund the Governor's Initiative really boiled down to blackmail. Saving the salmon is either the right thing to do or it isn't. We all know that man's uses of the land have had an impact on the fish and if you're a big exploiter of natural resources you should step up to bat and help out. I read, a couple of years ago, about how the timber industry spends six-million dollars a year on TV ads, to show us the good they are doing. Frankly, I would be a lot more supportive of the timber industry if they put that money on the ground, into worthwhile projects. The adage, "Money talks and *# walks," applies here. On a positive note, I have noticed a real

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More Letters

Art Center needs help of community

To the Editor:

The Vernonia Hands On Art Center was established as an outlet to help the kids of the community deal with the flood of 1996. The art center has been funded by Columbia County Mental Health (CCMH), the Oregon Flood Support Project (OFSP) and a few individual donors from outside the community.

It is now time for the community to step in and provide support for the program to continue. The CCMH/OFSP funding has expired, but there are opportunities for additional funding through various grant and trust organizations. In fact, several organizations have expressed a keen interest in supporting the program.

There is only one obstacle. These organizations require that the program be supported by local businesses and individuals as well.

The art center has been incorporated as a 501 C(3) non-profit entity, so your donation, however large or small, is tax deductible.

I encourage the businesses and individuals of this community to contact Michele Kunkel, Director at 429-4014. Find out more about the center, its programs and future.

Sincerely,
Don Kunkel
Vernonia

County employees object to budgeting

To the Editor:

A proposed 1997-98 budget was recently presented to the Columbia County Budget Committee. We are writing this letter as employees of the County and taxpaying citizens because we are seriously concerned about the priorities set out in this budget.

The budget allocates \$300,000 to Courthouse renovation and to lease additional office facilities. This plan is not part of the State mandate to create local correctional facilities, in fact, if a new correctional facility is built, the jail may be moved out of the Courthouse, thereby increasing available space within the Courthouse. Also, the building that is under consideration for a lease will need extensive remodeling, so it appears the County might lease a building that it does not have the money to renovate or operate.

The above plans are unnecessary and particularly unwise in the face of budget reductions. The facilities plan can only be paid for by further reducing services to the public. This budget would do that by eliminating about six employees, expanding proposed layoffs from about two or three positions to NINE positions.

In summary, this budget proposes to REDUCE COUNTY SERVICES while at the

same time ADDING FACILITIES WITH UNKNOWN COSTS and providing NO TAX SAVINGS to the public. If you believe these priorities need to be changed, you can make a difference. The full committee will not finish its work until May 21, and the Commissioners can change it any time prior to July 1. Please let the County Budget Committee know how you feel. A schedule of meeting times is available from the Commissioners Office at 397-4322. Committee members include the three County Commissioners — Jack Peterson, Joel Yarbor and Tony Hyde, and three citizen members — Sandy Dillard, Bob Schmor and Bessie Hausler.

Sincerely,
Kathy Boucher
Pam Benham
Alan King
Michael Simpson
Jeff Benham
Judy Gettman
Ethelmae Jordan

Double majority vote creates participation

To the Editor:

Your May 7th editorial position on Ballot Measure 50 was well taken. Comments on the double majority provision of both BM47 and BM50 are wrong. Double majority provision is there to promote both debate and voter participation.

I was a volunteer aid in the Wayne Morse campaign in 1968. Among the many lectures and training sessions was one presented by a local teachers union on how to promote an unpopular school levy. It's simple. You give it as little publicity as you can and hope only the teachers turn out to vote!

I have watched our taxes forced through the roof all over the state in the thirty years since, by a minority of voters. The double majority forces these measures into the public forum. Those that are necessary will be debated and passed by the majority. Those issues that are excessive, unnecessary or superfluous will attract only a minority and will be defeated.

Isn't that how the system is supposed to work?

Sincerely,
Bergh Bechen
Banks

Chamber continues vital involvement

To the Editor:

Many positive things are happening in Vernonia. Strategic planning on the future of the city, discussions about the new Vernonia Building, and a renewed sense of community pride are just a few of the exciting reasons that Vernonia will be a town of future vitality and growth. The Vernonia Area Chamber of Commerce is an organization that is actively involved in these events and many others, and looks

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