

Business Notes

County assessor's office will close mornings until further notice

The Columbia County Assessors office will be closed to the public mornings, starting Monday, August 18. The closure, affecting only the assessor's office, is temporary. Normal hours will resume when the staff completes the work needed to implement Ballot Measure 50, the property tax

measure passed by Oregon voters in May, 1997.

"Public service is one of our highest priorities, so we did not make this decision lightly," County Assessor Tom Linhares said. "There simply is no other way to do all of the things required by Measure 50 and continue to offer the

high level of attention to taxpayers, property owners and professionals that utilize the records in our office," Linhares continued.

Measure 50 limits assessed values in 1997-98 to the assessed value in 1995-96 less ten percent. In addition, properties that have

changes such as new construction, property divisions (subdivisions, partitions), disqualification from special assessment or exemption and others, since 1995, must be calculated separately. Each of these accounts must be reviewed and recalculated for the new maximum assessed

value.

Initial estimates place the number of these "exceptions" at 30 to 40 percent of the 27,000-plus property tax accounts in Columbia County, according to Linhares. Normal office hours are expected to resume in October.

Prohaska sells business to ACI

Bob Prohaska, owner of Nehalem Valley Sanitary Service, told the Vernonia City Council Monday night that he has sold the business to Ambrose Calcagno Inc. (ACI), effective Sept. 1, 1997.

Rates for garbage service are determined by the council

in connection with the city franchise so there will be no changes at this time.

ACI will also assume rural area service. Rates outside the city are set by the county granting the franchise, so rates will also remain unchanged in rural areas.

Meeting for builders on new sprinkler system for residences

The St. Helens Rural Fire District will host a seminar to showcase a new residential fire sprinkler system that uses a special valve and half-inch pipe for easier installation and new levels of home safety. The seminar will be held August 21 from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. at St. Helens Main Fire Station, 105 South 12th Street.

Local builders, contractors, and building and fire officials will find the seminar of special interest. The featured speaker, Franz Haase of Peterborough, New Hampshire, is a nationally prominent expert in the residential sprinkler field. According to ,

"Mr. Haase is one of the leaders in the promotion of fire and life safety through the use of sprinklers in the home and is the person who invented the valve that is the key to this system," said Assistant Fire Chief Dick Jacobus. Haase will demonstrate the

latest approved system components and use a local house plan from the Warren area to show the layout of a typical home sprinkler system.

The St. Helens area has been selected as one of only two areas in the country to serve as a test site for this latest residential system, which features use of existing plumbing and 1/2 inch water lines to trim the costs of installation by as much as two-thirds the cost of previous systems. According to Jacobus, the 248-unit Ridgecrest subdivision will be a centerpiece for the test since the planned community will be 100-percent protected by residential sprinklers.

Anyone interested in learning about the latest developments in home sprinkler technology and the new costs of installing a sprinkler system should plan to attend, Jacobus emphasized.

VanNatta tree farm in final four

The VanNatta family tree farm near Rainier was recently selected as the Western Regional winner for the National Tree Farmer of the Year.

The operation conducted primarily by KC VanNatta and his son, Jeff, has frequently been selected for tours as an

example of excellent management for others interested in healthy silviculture.

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The Oregon Notification Center is a state agency formed to provide homeowners

and contractors with a single contact point for coordinating the location of underground utility equipment. State law requires all underground facility owners and operators to subscribe, and provides fines for those who do not call to request an underground 'locate'.

"The one-call system helps

consumers avoid the hassle of making multiple calls for a cable locate," said Del McGinnis, operations manager at West Oregon Electric Cooperative.

The system also helps avoid the danger and liability for repair costs if an underground cable is damaged.

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