

Citizens tell council "Keep bikes off the sidewalks"

Bikes, skateboards and rollerblades don't belong on downtown sidewalks, about fifteen people told the Vernonia City Council at a public hearing Jan. 10. Two people, including Mayor Art Parrow who proposed the change, supported repealing the section of the ordinance that includes the ban because of the danger to bike riders from increased traffic on Bridge Street.

Many of those who testified spoke about the hazards of

mixing sometimes careless bike riders with the poor eyesight, poor hearing and brittle bones of older people.

All agreed that Bridge Street, which is also Oregon Hwy. 47, has heavy truck traffic that isn't going to go away. They pointed out that the bridge crossing Rock Creek for the linear trail extension from Anderson Park is a good beginning for a bicycle route, but it isn't paved from the bridge to the schools or to Lake Vernon-

ia. Speakers urged completion of the trail for a safe bike route.

Ken Bateman, who handles the city's insurance, said the safety consultant for the city's insurance company recommended keeping bikes off sidewalks in downtown areas, with the main concern being toddlers and seniors.

Consensus of those at the hearing seemed to be to ban bicycles, skateboards and rollerblades from sidewalks on Bridge Street between Rose

Ave. and Adams Ave., and to install signs directing bike riders to Maple Street.

Included in the message from many who opposed allowing bikes on downtown sidewalks was a plea to speed up implementation of the "wheels" park that will be developed on City-owned property across Rock Creek from Hawkins Park.

There were also two letters supporting the ban, and petitions with 127 signatures.

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Utilities reach agreement; no PGE sale to WOEC

Portland General Electric, Columbia River PUD, Clatskanie PUD and West Oregon Electric Cooperative, Inc., announced Tuesday that they have reached agreement regarding the transfer of PGE's service territory in Columbia County.

Under the memorandum of understanding, CRPUD would receive all PGE territory in Columbia City, St. Helens, Scappoose, the Scappoose Drainage Improvement Company area, and an area of Multnomah County on the county line — totaling more than 6500 cus-

tomers. Clatskanie PUD would receive PGE's Rainier territory, with about 850 customers.

The parties will draw up definitive agreements during the next several weeks and seek approval from the Oregon Public Utility Commission. The parties will work towards transfer

of the property by spring.

The PUDs would purchase the territory and its distribution system for about \$10 million. In a separate transaction, PGE would make an approximately \$2 million payment into a trust which will provide benefits to West Oregon customers. The

amount ultimately received by West Oregon is dependent upon several factors agreed upon between West Oregon and PGE. The overall value of the transaction to PGE and its customers is equivalent to the transaction formerly proposed between West Oregon and PGE.

"As a member-owned organization our primary goal in these negotiations has always been to provide benefits to our members," said Russell Green, West Oregon General Manager, "This agreement meets that goal."

PGE President Peggy Fowler said, "We have been looking for the best way to deliver benefits to our Columbia County customers. We believed the proposal with West Oregon accomplished that. In the recent elections, those customers told us they had another preference. We have worked hard to reach a settlement that is good for them, is good for PGE, and is fair to West Oregon and the PUDs."

CRPUD General Manager Fergus Pilon was happy with the agreement. "We are pleased that all parties worked together to reach this agreement, and we look forward to delivering the benefits of public power to these new customers."

BPA power outages affect WOEC area

The wind storm Jan. 16 had great potential for creating havoc with falling trees and power outages throughout the northwest.

Sure enough, all WOEC members lost power Sunday afternoon, when two BPA transmission lines went down. Power was restored for most members around 6:00 p.m. By Monday morning, about 50 members were still without power.

Rakish...

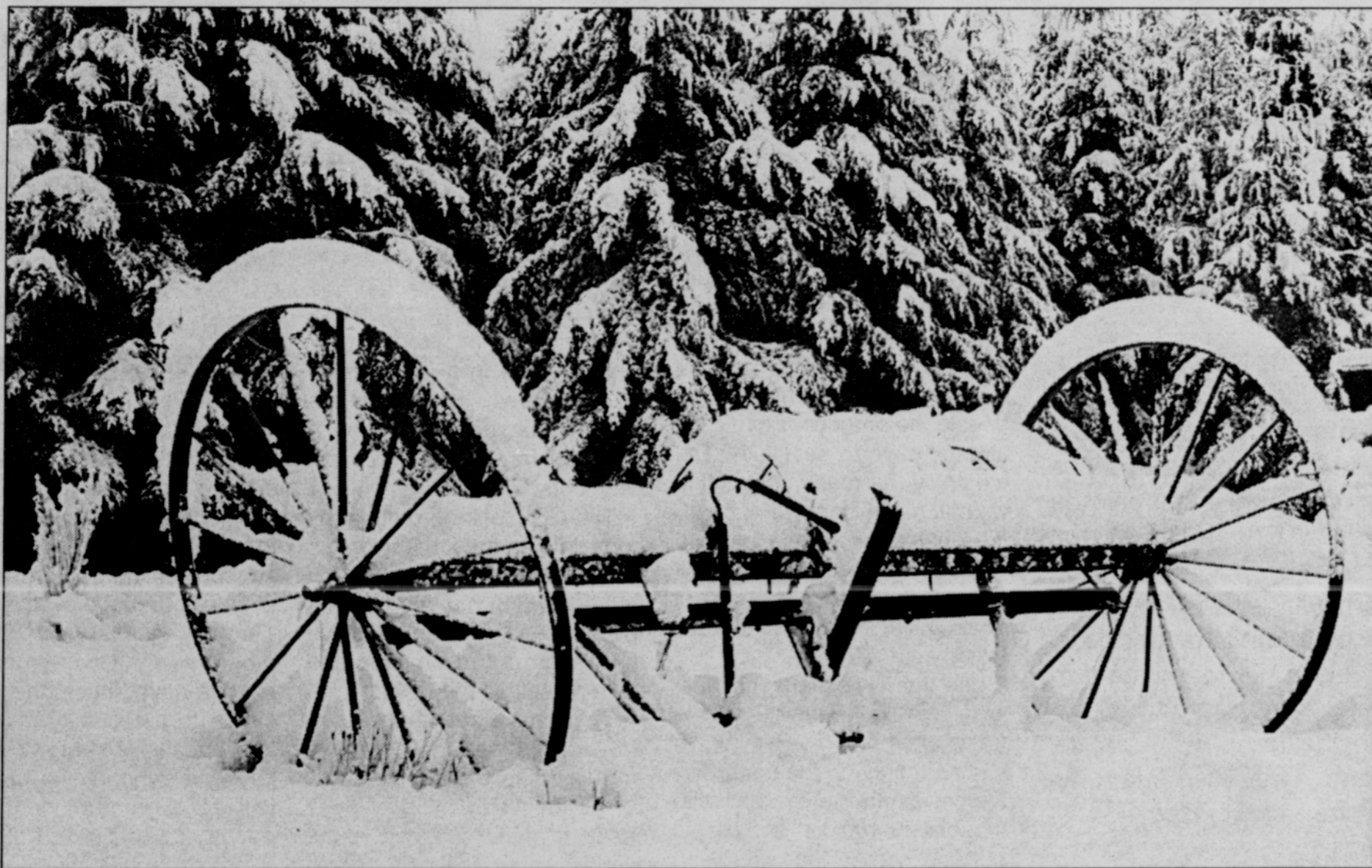


Photo by Judy Hill

Snow adorned this rusting old rake with a plush, new white coat.

BOC may look at linear trail, but no date has been set

By Noni Andersen

At their Jan. 12 meeting, the Columbia County Board of Commissioners talked about coming to Vernonia and looking at the project that would extend the linear trail from Anderson Park to Vernonia Lake—and that's all they did. No date has been set for this big excursion,

however.

Commissioner Rita Bernhard said she "thought they had set a tentative date" but, on checking the tape recording of the meeting, found that nothing had been done in the way of scheduling, tentative or otherwise.

Bernhard, at least, was available last Friday. The other

two commissioners, Chair Jack Peterson and Commissioner Tony Hyde were out of town. This week, Bernhard is on vacation.

In the meantime, the project is still waiting, regardless of an updated agreement signed by Peterson, Hyde and Commissioner Joel Yarbor in September, 1998 (prior to Bernhard's

election).

The updated agreement, also signed by ODOT officials, covers an enhancement project "to grade and resurface a section of abandoned Burlington Northern Railroad right-of-way from the southern city limits of the City of Vernonia to Lake Vernonia Park and con-

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