

## State gives report cards to school districts and schools

State District/School Report Cards have arrived and there are no surprises in their evaluations for either Vernonia or Banks schools.

Schools were rated in two categories: Student Performance, which accounted for 80 percent of the rating, considered improvement over time and the percent of students meeting state standards in 1999.

Student Behavior, which ac-

counted for the remaining 20 percent, considered attendance, plus the dropout rate for high schools.

Two additional elements are on the report cards. School Characteristics is based on the percent of students taking state tests. Other Information includes the education and experience of instructional staff and, for high schools, SAT scores.

Probably of more specific interest to most people, were the

rankings in elements of the state standards: reading, writing, math multiple choice and math problem solving.

Vernonia Schools ranked "Satisfactory" overall, except Lincoln Grade School which will not receive a report card until late February because it has no students in grades 3, 5, 8 and 10.

Banks Junior High School and Banks Elementary School were both rated "Strong," just

one notch below the top rating of Exceptional.

Banks High School ranked Satisfactory, overall.

District Report Cards show overall Student Performance, Student Behavior, District Characteristics and Other Information. "Other" is a table showing the professional experience of teachers and administrators in the district in the 1998-99 school year.

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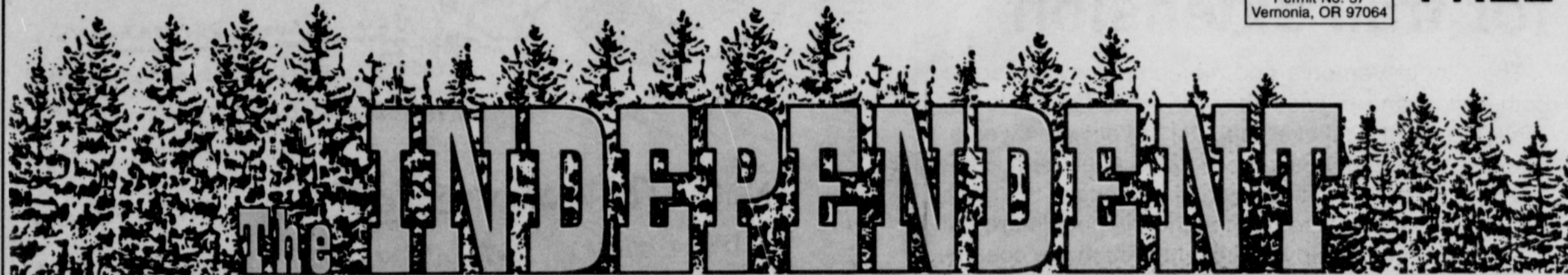
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Vol. 15, No 4

"Voice of the Upper Nehalem River Valley"

February 16, 2000

### Repairs are on the way!



JUDY HILL/THE INDEPENDENT

This 45-foot break in the Banks-Vernonia Linear Trail, just north of the Beaver Creek Trailhead, will soon be scheduled for repairs. Funds have been appropriated for the job, specifications are being prepared and bids will soon be accepted, according to resident Park Ranger Scott Green. In addition to destroying the trail, the washout caused by heavy rains during the winter of 1998-99 uncovered GTE's fiber optic cable to Vernonia.

## Weight limits heavy for council

All members of the Vernonia City Council agreed, at their Feb. 7 meeting, that weight limits are needed on most of the city's residential streets. The question that is troubling to them is how to institute weight limits without unduly imposing on people who may drive heavy trucks to their homes and park them there overnight, particularly in the case of those who operate their businesses from their homes.

In order to develop a workable ordinance, the council asked that a draft be brought to their next meeting for review. They will then set a date for a public meeting in order to allow public participation in the final ordinance.

Rob Hallyburton, of the state Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD), gave a presentation to the

council on changes in the periodic review process for the city's comprehensive plan.

Senate Bill 543, passed by the last legislature, exempts cities with a population of 2500 or less within their Urban Growth Boundary, from the requirement for periodic review. In lieu of that lengthy, expensive and somewhat cumbersome, public process, small cities may now opt to take proposed changes to their comprehensive plans directly to DLCD for review, assistance and/or preliminary approval. Final approval will remain with the Land Conservation and Development Commission (LCDC).

At this time, the City of Vernonia has nearly completed its periodic review so the council is undecided whether to opt out or continue the process. That decision will receive further

scrutiny.

City Administrator Michael Sykes told the council that one or two junior or senior Vernonia High School students will be selected each semester to be placed in a school-to-work opportunity in the City Hall office. The positions will be non-paid, but the students will earn high school credits by fulfilling the school-to-work requirements. Guidelines and criteria are available at the high school.

Sykes also announced that city planner Julie Coontz, who is an attorney, will assume some of the in-house duties of City Attorney Diana Shera-Taylor. Shera-Taylor will continue working on contract with the city in other capacities, including that of prosecuting attorney.

The council approved liquor license renewals for Cedar Side Inn, Mini Mart and Sentry.

## Water project done, rate increase starts

Now that 39,000 linear feet of pipeline has been installed, improvements made on the Corey Hill Reservoir, a booster pump station added, 620 water services and 19 fire hydrants replaced, plus 40 additional hydrants installed, the City of Vernonia's water distribution system has been transformed. It is no longer inadequate and it will be able to handle anticipated growth for many years.

Additionally, the whole project was completed sooner than anticipated—and that is a mixed blessing. Starting March 1, an increase in rates will affect everyone who uses city water.

The project started in 1996, when citizens identified the water system as a high priority project that needed to be upgraded. Among the problems resulting from a 40-60 year-old water distribution system was the loss of 40 percent of the city's treated water. This not only wasted water, it wasted funds that were spent on energy and labor costs.

Improvements have resulted in about two million fewer gallons of water used this past October and nearly three million gallons less in November.

When the city received a grant of \$631,300 and a loan of \$2,093,700 from the federal government, they were also required to adopt an ordinance that would increase water rates high enough to pay for all costs of the program, including the loan. The increase amounted to \$12 per month, but the city opted to institute it in increments.

The first \$4.00 increase was in October, 1998; the second in October, 1999. The third segment was to have started in October of this year but will

start March 1 because the job is complete and the full increase must be in effect in order to close out the loan.

"Many homeowners will reap the benefit of lower premiums for fire protection insurance, because of the new hydrants," public works director Robyn Bassett noted.

The city has instituted System Development Charges (SDC) to accommodate future growth. The SDCs are paid when building permits are acquired for new residences. The funds are placed in a reserve fund that may then be used only for capital improvements, such as a new reservoir.

The new rates will be as follows:

Residential, inside City limits — \$28.00 per month including the first 2,000 gallons of water used, plus \$1.25 for each additional 1,000 gallons used.

Residential, outside City limits — \$27.50 per month, plus \$2.50 per 1,000 gallons used.

Business — \$26.50 per month, plus \$1.25 per 1,000 gallons used.

Senior citizens, 62 or older, will retain eligibility for a 15 percent discount on water (The discount does not apply to sewer charges.)

Rates for master meters and multiple dwellings are available at City Hall.

### Holiday changes Council schedule

The next meeting of the Vernonia City Council will be held on Tuesday, February 22, instead of Monday, Feb. 21, which is the Presidents' Day holiday.

The meeting will begin at 6:30 p.m. in City Hall, 1001 Bridge Street.