

Lists of candidates develop as filing deadline nears

There will be at least one contested race for commissioner in Columbia County. As of Tuesday morning, Feb. 29, three candidates had filed for Commissioner Position One, currently held by Jack Peterson.

Democrats Mike Avent, of Rainier, and Susan Easley, of St. Helens, will face each other in the May primary election.

On the Republican ballot, Colleen DeShazer, Scappoose, is currently unopposed

in the primary election. She, or another Republican will meet the winner of the Democrat primary in the November general election.

Peterson told *The INDEPENDENT* yesterday that he has made no decision, but is leaning toward not seeking re-election.

There are no filings, as yet, for Commissioner Position 3, currently held by Tony Hyde. Hyde has said he will file for a

second term.

Other positions on the May ballot include Columbia County Sheriff, Treasurer and Surveyor. Sheriff Phil Derby has filed for re-election, as has Treasurer Paulette Kuiper-Hall.

There is no candidate, at this time, for county surveyor.

Betsy Johnson, a Scappoose Democrat, has announced her candidacy for the Oregon House in District 1, to replace Jackie Taylor, D-Asto-

ria, who has run up against term limits. District 1 includes most of Columbia County and the area along Hwy. 30 in Clatsop County.

Elaine Hopson, D-Tillamook, has filed for re-election in District 2, which includes Vernonia and most of the Nehalem Valley, part of Washington County, and most of Clatsop and Tillamook Counties.

March 7, 2000, is the final date to file nomination papers.

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Dig it...



With lots of willing hands (not to mention legs and backs), and two days of nice weather, a large selection of native flora was planted on the banks of Bear Creek between Vernonia City Hall and the Public Library. The sides of the creek that was once contained in a culvert that was removed in 1998, were planted with ferns, Oregon grape, salal, vine maple, elderberry, red osier dogwood, huckleberry and rush. The Upper Nehalem Watershed Council coordinated the cooperative effort by Vernonia Youth Corps, Hire the Fishers program, and the Izaak Walton League. West Oregon Electric Co-op is donating wood chips for mulch, and the City of Vernonia has agreed to water the plants throughout the summer. The plants were all dug from Longview Fibre or BLM lands.

Citizens complain of police harassment

A nearly full house attended the Feb. 22 meeting of the Vernonia City Council, with many of those in attendance expressing dissatisfaction with methods used by the Vernonia Police Department.

Most of those who spoke to the council were particularly incensed by officers who use a "burned out license plate light" as a reason to stop a vehicle, then detain the occupants, often for 45 minutes or more, while conducting a computer check on the driver and passengers. If no other problems were found, some said, they were cited for the license plate light violation instead of being given a warning to get it fixed. At least one person said his license plate light wasn't even burned out, but he didn't realize it until he started to fix it.

Kerry Lyon, owner of The Lyon's Den, was the first to address the council, following up on a letter he had sent them which detailed an incident that occurred when he was a passenger in a vehicle driven by

Toni Candiello. According to both Lyon and Candiello, who spoke later, the officer was grossly out of line (He was later terminated by Police Chief Jim Walters.)

"...business in this town [has] dwindled to the point where there's hardly a car on the street after 9:00 p.m." Lyon said, "I attribute this directly to overly aggressive police on duty at night."

Another resident said his parked car was hit by an out-of-state, uninsured pickup, but the driver wasn't arrested and the officer who responded didn't file out a police report.

One man said he'd been stopped several times and his vehicle was stopped, although no laws had been broken, even when someone else was driving.

The most serious charges were made by Jay Mahn, who has filed a Tort Claim with the City stemming from an incident last summer. Mahn, who is under indictment for assault two, unlawful use of a gun and menacing, said that he is not guilty of the charges and claimed that the two Vernonia officers who arrested him lied in the police report and to the Grand Jury.

Several speakers emphasized the need for an ongoing training program for officers. Also suggested was a citizens advisory/review board.

Chief Walters, was not at the meeting, but he later told *The INDEPENDENT* "We have made some changes and we will continue working to correct the situation."

Coontz' evaluation.

Councilor Gayle Shriver reported that a committee formed to develop a bicycle ordinance

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A full agenda lengthens council meeting

The Vernonia City Council heard three presentations, several citizen complaints (see related story at right), and several staff reports in a four-hour meeting on Feb. 22.

Will Glessner of the Oregon Trails Volkssport Association, told the council that the Cedar Milers club is sponsoring two 10 kilometer walks in Vernonia on April first and anticipates that 300-400 people will participate.

Vernonia Rural Fire District Chief Paul Epler gave the council draft copies of the Vernonia Emergency Operations Plan, and briefly described how it would function in an emer-

gency. The plan provides a framework to guide the City in efforts to respond to emergencies, prepare for them or recover from them. Copies of the 80 page plan are available at the Fire Station.

The council reviewed a proposed ordinance governing vehicle weight limits on residential streets and, after discussion, referred it back to staff for some clarification. A public hearing on the ordinance will be held March 20 at 6:30 p.m. in City Hall.

A contract was approved with Century West Engineering to conduct an evaluation of the city air field and develop a plan

for appropriate development of the field. The project will include data collection and review, drawings, planning evaluation, a five-year capital improvement plan and a technical report.

Administrator Mike Sykes updated the council on talks with the county regarding costs for the Justice Court. The council concurred with Sykes' recommendation that the City terminate its present agreement and negotiate a new agreement that will not require the city to pay any costs for the county court.

City planner Julie Coontz reported that Jim Holycross, of

the county Land Development Services, had received an application for a zone amendment within Vernonia's Urban Growth Boundary, from R-10 to Mobile Home Residential.

In accordance with the City/County UGB management agreement, Holycross inquired whether the city would extend water and sewer for the requested change. Because the city had no communication from Chris Liu, the proposed developer, and could not determine whether he planned to "meet or exceed" Vernonia's design standards, Coontz recommended denial of the request. The council agreed with