

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

Complaints provide impetus to improve

It's easy, tempting...and human...to dismiss complaints we don't want to hear, but government agencies do so at their own peril, especially at the local level. In a town as small as Vernonia, complaints about any part of city government must be taken seriously. It is foolish to do otherwise.

Though only a half-dozen people spoke up at the Feb. 22 meeting of the Vernonia City Council, their complaints were consistent: They feel there is a deliberate pattern of harassment by some of the city's police officers.

Generally speaking, people have to be pretty upset before they will complain in a public forum about police behavior. They fear that any complaint about police harassment will engender even more harassment; unfortunately, that is often true.

Vernonia Chief of Police Jim Walters has dismissed the officer most frequently named for unprofessional behavior. That was appropriate, but more needs to be done. Walters seems to be willing to follow through with closer supervision, but he must also insist that his officers treat people respectfully unless they have reason to do otherwise. "Fishing expeditions" just to see they can find something, anything, wrong, are particularly odious.

When young officers come out of the police academy, they know how to be law enforcement officers; when they get on the street, they need to know how to be peace officers. There is a difference.

This isn't NYPD Blue, and our officers shouldn't act like Sipowicz. The council should seriously consider a police advisory board to work with Walters in a collaborative effort to help the department bridge the gap that has developed.

Attitude of VHS wrestlers deserves appreciation

Two Logger wrestlers—Justin Johnson and Blaine Vandehey—returned from state competition with second place finishes, something that would be gratifying to most competitors, but not these two.

They each entered the competition as number one seed in their respective weight classes and aren't satisfied with second place. Nevertheless, the second-place finishes showed the true measure of these two young men because they didn't whine or complain, and they didn't blame anyone else.

Thanks, Justin and Blaine, your attitudes are refreshing.

It's election time, can you vote?

This is an election year and, if you want to make your own choice, you must register to vote. The primary election is in May, but registration closes 20 days before the election, so plan to register by April 15.

On the other hand, if you don't want to vote, you can always let someone else make the decisions for you.

BULLETIN ALERT

SCHOOL BOARD'S CHANGE CURRICULUM

THERE IS NO LONGER A NEED TO TEACH THE 3-R'S IN OUR SCHOOLS

THAT IS THE FINAL ANSWER

WE WILL NOW ONLY TEACH TRIVIA AND COACH THE STUDENTS TO BE QUALIFIED GAME SHOW CONTESTANTS OR "LIFELINES"

BUT WHAT IF I WANT TO BE THE HOST!? THEY MAKE THE BIG BUCKS!!

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Ike Says...

By Dale Webb

The Izaak Walton League sponsored a meeting to see what kind of interest there is in our community for a Steelhead brood stock program in the upper Nehalem River. The turnout was good, and I was amazed at the sentiments of many of the local fisherman. There was talk of catch and release before it became law, of closing spawning areas and even giving up fishing to guarantee the future of Steelhead fishing. Nobody mentioned rescinding the catch and release rule until the local Steelhead fishery can support a limited consumptive harvest. The consensus was to try and enhance local Steelhead so that, eventually, they will be able to sustain a modest harvest. Many anglers talked of being happy to take home only several fish a year.

The group decided that releasing unfed fry would be the best approach and have the least detrimental hatchery influence on the fish. That's a complicated process that would include catching the fish by hook and line, transporting them first to a holding area, then to the hatchery on the North Fork Nehalem. At the hatchery, the fish would be spawned and the eyed-up eggs brought back to Vernonia, where the eggs would be raised and the fry released. Surveying for suitable release sites would also take considerable time and effort.

In order to pull off this program successfully, a dedicated group of individuals is going to be needed. The core group is a good start, but we will need more. If you are interested, please notify me. If there is not enough interest generated, this project will not be attempted.

When you go to pick up your new hunting and fishing licenses, you will have to dig deeper in your wallet—the Oregon Legislature agreed to a fee increase requested by Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife. ODF&W is in the midst of a budget deficit and needed the funds to become solvent once again.

Seniors will pay an annual fee of one-half the cost of a regular adult license, which means \$16.50 for a combination license, \$8.50 for a hunting license and \$9.50 for a fishing license. There are no discounts for tag and bird validation fees. The one exemption is for seniors who held a permanent hunting or fishing license at the beginning of the year. They are "grandfathered" and will not have to begin paying the annual fees.

Fishermen will no longer be able to buy individual fishing tags for salmon, steelhead, sturgeon or halibut. Now you will get all the tags for one low price of \$16.50. If you fish in only one

hatchery, you get to subsidize everybody else. Of course ODF&W didn't lose money on this deal. Pioneer licenses (people 65 or older and residents of Oregon for 50 years) will be free, but the holders will now have to pay full price for tag fees. All tag fees have been increased, with deer and elk tags going up by \$3.50 each.

With these fee increases, the cost for a family of four who hunt deer and elk and also fish for a species requiring a punch card, can now expect to shell out around \$400 per year. While many of us can afford to pay this amount, I wonder if our sport is, once again, going to be a sport of kings.

Deer in the local area are again experiencing high levels of hair loss syndrome. Both of this year's fawns at my house have succumbed to this condition and, at last count, I know of at least seven deer that have died of this cause in or nearby the city limits of Vernonia. Even though this year's weather has been drier and sunnier than last year, the deer seem to be succumbing at just as high a rate as last year. The key to identifying a deer with hair loss syndrome is a scruffy look to the hair along the deer's back and sides. The hair will look like it is standing on end from static electricity. Deer with advanced cases of hair loss syndrome appear white on the sides from the flank to the front shoulders. Death usually occurs because of hypothermia and malnutrition.

With two years of high levels of loss in the fawn and yearling age classes, our deer herd is on the brink of a serious decline. ODF&W must reimpose the moratorium on antlerless harvest of deer until this problem is fully understood and a solution found to these dramatic losses. Anything less is a direct disregard of ODF&W's mission statement, and is likely to cause a legislative backlash against the department.

Many of you have seen my new toy on top of my pickup. Kayaking has become a passion, and I have spent many an hour on Lake Vernonia getting the feel of this new kayak. Learning to maneuver, turn and paddle in a straight line required practice. All the while I have been practicing in the lake, I have been eyeing the Nehalem river. Finally, I called Matt Chesley, another local kayaker, and we took a short river trip from the boat launch at the Spar Tree Restaurant to just below Big Eddy Park. The river is a lot more dynamic than a lake or even large rivers like the Columbia. I was telling Matt that I had not tipped this kayak over and, not even thirty seconds later, I was doing the cowboy scramble, getting back into my boat.

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