

## Vernonia wins grant to extend B-V trail

It was a long shot last February, when the City of Vernonia applied to the Oregon Department of Parks and Recreation for a grant of \$70,000 to extend the Banks-Vernonia Linear Park from Anderson Park to Vernonia Lake.

There was approximately \$600,000 in the Recreation Trails Program administered by

State Parks, with half of that amount to be used for motorized trails and half for non-motorized trails. There was also some question whether an application would do any good. The decision was made to go for it.

The long shot paid off.

The \$70,000 will enable the City to purchase the remainder

of the property needed along the old railroad grade that parallels the Nehalem River, and transport rock from Oak Ranch Quarry. Still needed are funds to pave the final portion of the trail, approximately \$37,000.

"We are hopeful that Columbia County will partner with us to complete this project," said Vernonia City Ad-

ministrators Mike Sykes.

Columbia County anticipates nearly \$120,000 in Bike Path funds for fiscal year 2000-01, according to their recently published budget.

The City has also received a grant for construction of two handicapped-accessible floating piers at the lake.

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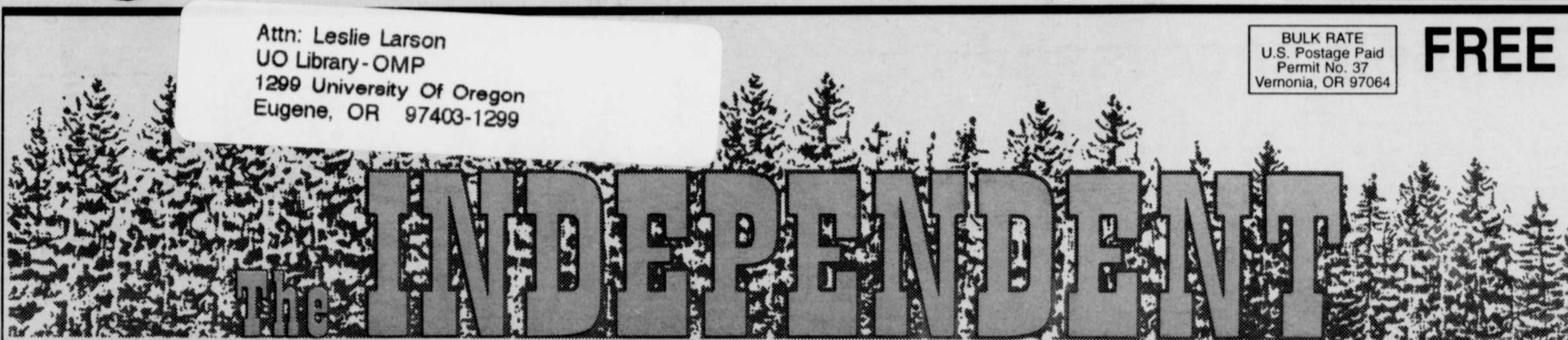
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### Caught in the act...



Yes, they're painting a building, but it certainly isn't an act of vandalism. On a sunny, 80 degree day, April Kinney, on the ladder, Donna Gehrke and Michael Snow started painting a mural on the wall of Vernonia Hardware. The design, by Snow, includes a train with a load of logs, a loaded log truck, and a tree being topped.

## Deeth targeted for Banks budget woes

By Judy Hill

Banks Mayor Ray Deeth was in the hot seat, perhaps unfairly, for purchases he authorized during the past year without consulting the Banks City Council.

Following news of a \$136,000 shortfall in the 1999/2000 City budget, a letter from councilor Norma Stewart asked Deeth to justify, at the June 13 City Council meeting, four items acquired by the City during recent months.

One of the items Deeth was asked to account for, a storage cabinet for water testing equipment, turned out to be a donation to the city. Also questioned were the rental of a postage meter at \$11.75 per month for use by City offices and library, and a \$2600 Local Government Personnel Institute study that was needed to bring City administrative files into compliance for City employees.

It was an \$835 digital camera, however, that focused the council's frustration on the mayor. Time was spent debating the need for such an item, which Deeth said cut the time and expense involved in processing film, and allowed various City departments to obtain computer- and internet-ready images without scanning. He cited several recent uses to which the camera had been put.

Councilors Norma Stewart and Dana Campbell insisted that a suitable but less expensive camera might have been purchased. Deeth responded that this was the best option in a camera that contained a floppy disk that could be inserted into a computer without additional hardware.

Additionally, Deeth maintained, a certain level of quality

and resolution must be present in a camera which will be used in a variety of situations (low lighting, fast action, details) and which is expected to produce reliable and clearly detailed photographs, without further manipulation, for City business.

The bottom line, said the council, is that the mayor must bring big ticket items before the council for approval. What constitutes a big ticket item was not defined, however.

The council has discussed a 1999/2000 budget shortfall since late last year. In November, during the City audit, the council knew that the General Fund was overdrawn by about \$25,000. At the time, it was felt that additional income from property taxes due to population increase would resolve the problem. The council was advised by City Recorder Bob Prickett that, while spending should be watched, funds could be transferred from other areas.

Prickett also said that with so many ongoing projects in Banks, especially those related to the City water system, it is often impossible to know up front what the final costs will be.

In February, the council adopted a supplemental budget to cover a \$36,000 shortfall.

Meanwhile, the council has continued to allocate funds for pet projects, such as decorations and landscaping and has, against the advice of City Planner K.J. Won, continued with the costly 20-year Comprehensive Plan that is no longer required for a city the size of Banks. Won said at the March City Council meeting that Banks could qualify for techni-

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## Hard work, dedication = SIP and DIP

A dedicated group of parents and staff has been working for over a year to finalize the Vernonia School Improvement Plans (SIP) and District Improvement Plan (DIP). Their work was completed and presented to the school district Board of Directors in May. The board approved the plans as working draft plans that will continue to evolve. The DIP and SIP are required as part of the state-adopted education reform, and are essential to future efforts to secure grant funds.

The district goals and school goals intertwine and are mutually supportive. One goal adopted by the school board is to provide an atmosphere that focuses on student learning and achievement in all programs. The goals selected for

the DIP support this emphasis. The student learning goal requires each student to be a competent and proficient reader. Additionally, the district climate goal (the atmosphere surrounding individual goals) is for each student to be a productive, positive member of the school and community. These goals and the DIP are being used in designing improvements in the instructional program, developing the master schedule and implementing the Certificate of Initial Mastery required of each student.

An important part in the development of these plans was the involvement of a broad-based group of parents, students and staff. The Site Councils at Washington Grade School and Vernonia High School, members of the Cur-

riculum Council, the school principals and the district superintendent composed the work group. It was also critical that the plan be integrated across the curriculum and from kindergarten through grade 12.

The previous DIP focused on improvement of math scores on state benchmark tests. This new plan focuses on two goals. First, it recognizes reading as a critical, life-long skill. Improvements in the school climate, such as participation in activities and citizenship, are the second focus. The plan is designed to improve student achievement across all subject areas including music and mathematics.

The DIP is a combination of the two SIPs with some additional information about the

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