

# The INDEPENDENT

Serving the upper Nehalem River valley. Published twice monthly, on the first and third Wednesdays of each month, by Public Opinion Laboratory Ltd., 725 Bridge Street, Vernonia, OR 97064, as a free newspaper. Editors and Publishers, Dirk & Noni Andersen. Phone/Fax: (503) 429-9410.

## Opinion

### Vernonia successful in pursuit of funds

"The City of Vernonia and the community of people both inside and outside the city limits have accomplished a great deal over the past ten or twelve years..."

That quote is the beginning of an editorial Opinion in *The INDEPENDENT* issue of Feb. 16, 2000. It continued:

"...Vernonia will continue to vigorously pursue funds needed for economic development, safety and outdoor recreation. Our city government [and] the people of the community...have no intention of giving up just because other agencies put up road blocks.

It won't be easy, but it can and will be done."

That was the end of the commentary on Vernonia's refusal to give up on the linear trail extension, shortly after a grant application was submitted for the project.

Now, with an excellent grant from the state Parks Department, the goal is much closer than it was in February — but there are still hurdles.

Funding is still needed to pave the trail once the property has been purchased and the trail prepared. The City of Vernonia has a very tight budget in the coming fiscal year and can't come up with \$35-37,000 out of the general fund to complete the job.

This would be an excellent time for the county Board of Commissioners to be the "good guys" and support this project with some of the \$119,000 in Bicycle Path funds they will receive from the state this year.

### Banks council needs to take a different approach

Banks City Council is facing a serious budget shortfall that won't go away by pointing fingers. They need to take a different approach to understand the problem, starting, perhaps, with a careful study of the last audit report.

If that doesn't help, the arduous task of reviewing City expenditures month by month and item by item, making the necessary comparisons, may be the only way to find out why and how the shortfall occurred.

It is also obvious that the mayor and council members need to work on better communications, among themselves and with staff. No one on the council is trying to harm the City's operations so...*talk to each other before another crises occurs!*

### Senior News writer leaving

Pat and Eric Olson are leaving Vernonia for Grants Pass and, while we wish them well, we want to say, "Don't go!" We will miss the wonderful job Pat Olson does in reporting on activities at the Vernonia Senior Citizens Center. Her warmth, humor and writing skill are unique and will be greatly missed.



### Unforeseen expenses plague Banks

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procal assistance grants if it relinquished the plan.

And there have been unforeseen events, such as the failure of Banks to obtain Community Development Block Grants to complete the water and sewer projects. The city will borrow \$615,000 for this purpose, and the interest rate is still not nailed down. Water rates were increased to service the loan but another public hearing will be held to discuss how to pay for an increase in the loan's interest rate.

Each of these and similar is-

sues provokes a need for professional services such as engineering, city planning or attorney services, with fees ranging from \$60 to \$110 per hour.

The council has not addressed ways to oversee the hours these professionals bill to the City.

Banks is in a protracted state of change, like so many suburban towns in Oregon and across America. The population doubled in a single year, and the infrastructure — roads, water, sewer, services, etc. — has to catch up to that fact.

A few hundred dollars spent

by the mayor without council approval is regrettable but hardly the issue when the budget is overdrawn by \$136,000. The council voted at the June 13 meeting to have Council President Bob Orlowsky oversee spending. Perhaps this should have been done last fall when the first hints of trouble came after the City audit.

Both council and mayor need to get their priorities straight, keeping pot shots to a minimum, and communication and teamwork focused in order to guide Banks through a difficult period.

### Letters to the Editor

#### Improvement plan is result of dedication

To the Editor:

The completion of the School Improvement Plans (SIP) for Vernonia Elementary Schools and Vernonia High School was a formidable task. It required many hours of intense work with lively and often continuous discussion. It was accomplished with good humor and dedication.

I would especially like to thank Vernonia High School students Leslie Finamore and Randee Parker. Their input kept the rest of us centered on the students' interests and needs and is deeply embedded in the finished product.

Others who volunteered their time were Cici Bell, Robin Cochran, Rebecca Brookins, and Doreen Buchan. Dedicated teachers and administrators were Lynn Bergerson, James Brookins, Byron Brown, Sheri Burleson, Kim Emura, Bob Isted, Clint Kelly, Mary Miller, Larry McClellan, Mike Durbin and Kirk Sherril. We are excited about watching and participat-

ing in the implementation of the SIP.

The Site Councils at Washington Grade School and VHS are a good place for parents and community members to contribute to instructional improvement and implementation of the [state required] Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM). There are currently openings on both Site Councils. I want to encourage you to become a part of this process. If you are interested, please contact the principal's office at WGS or VHS, or me, at 429-8930

Looking forward to an exciting school year in 00-01.

Schann W. Nelson  
VHS Site Council

#### Need better reasons for cutting old trees

To the Editor:

As a taxpayer and a voter, I would like to know what's really going on at Ora Bolmeier Park and Airport Park. I work in parks where qualified people are paid to determine the fate of a tree.

The trees are considered to be landmarks if they have survived as long as the trees at Bolmeier Park and are not replaceable. Why are the trees here in Vernonia considered replaceable and who decided what was suitable for park use? Old growth Douglas Fir seems very park-like to me.

You also feel it necessary to not only cut down but remove the dying white fir from Airport Park. Why can't the trees be cut and left for nature to grow up around if they need to be cut at all? They couldn't be much of a hazard on the ground. My family and I want a better reason for removing trees.

Sam Potter  
Vernonia

#### A great year, thanks to all for everything

To the Editor:

I want to take the opportunity to thank the Vernonia community for all the support and warm welcome that I received throughout my exchange year. From senior trip fundraising to

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