

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

Grant awards are not haphazard accidents

The state Recreation Trails Program awarded \$70,000 to Vernonia last month, to purchase the remainder of the Linear Trail extension from Anderson Park to Lake Vernonia.

The Columbia County Board of Commissioners allocated \$35,000 to pave the Linear Trail extension from Anderson Park to Lake Vernonia.

The Northwest Oregon Economic Alliance awarded \$80,000 to Vernonia last week for infrastructure improvements to the RV sites at Anderson Park.

Lucky? No, luck had nothing to do with the successful efforts to fund these improvements.

Vision is needed, of course, but vision alone won't bring results. Planning is absolutely crucial. It is needed to bridge the gap between dreams and reality. A magnificent vision can be quickly destroyed by failing to consider whether it is feasible. Vernonia's understanding of outdoor recreation as an element in economic development (and the trail as a practical way to keep bikes and pedestrians off of Hwy. 47) eliminated any dreaminess.

Another critical factor in seeking grants is the willingness of the applicant to demonstrate good faith. So, how does an applicant demonstrate good faith? The old-fashioned way, with money and work.

It is sometimes painful to read or listen to requests for funding by an applicant that wants to have everything supplied. If an applicant doesn't want to commit funds or labor or materials, the application will usually be unsuccessful. Vernonia hasn't made that mistake. The city has consistently found a way to provide some sort of match. It sometimes takes creative efforts, but with a good city administration, the commitment is real.

Even when the funds involved are public money, the people responsible for allocating it are more comfortable when they see commitment on the part of the applicant. That is the way it should be.

Thanks, Commissioners and NOEA

The Columbia County Board of Commissioners did the right thing when they allocated \$35,000 to pave the linear trail extension. Chairman Tony Hyde and Commissioners Jack Peterson and Rita Bernhard deserve a public "Thank you." Your action is appreciated.

Hyde also deserves thanks for his work on the NOEA board. He is one of Columbia County's three members (Jeff VanNatta and Paul Pulliam are the other two.), but this thanks includes all the NOEA board.

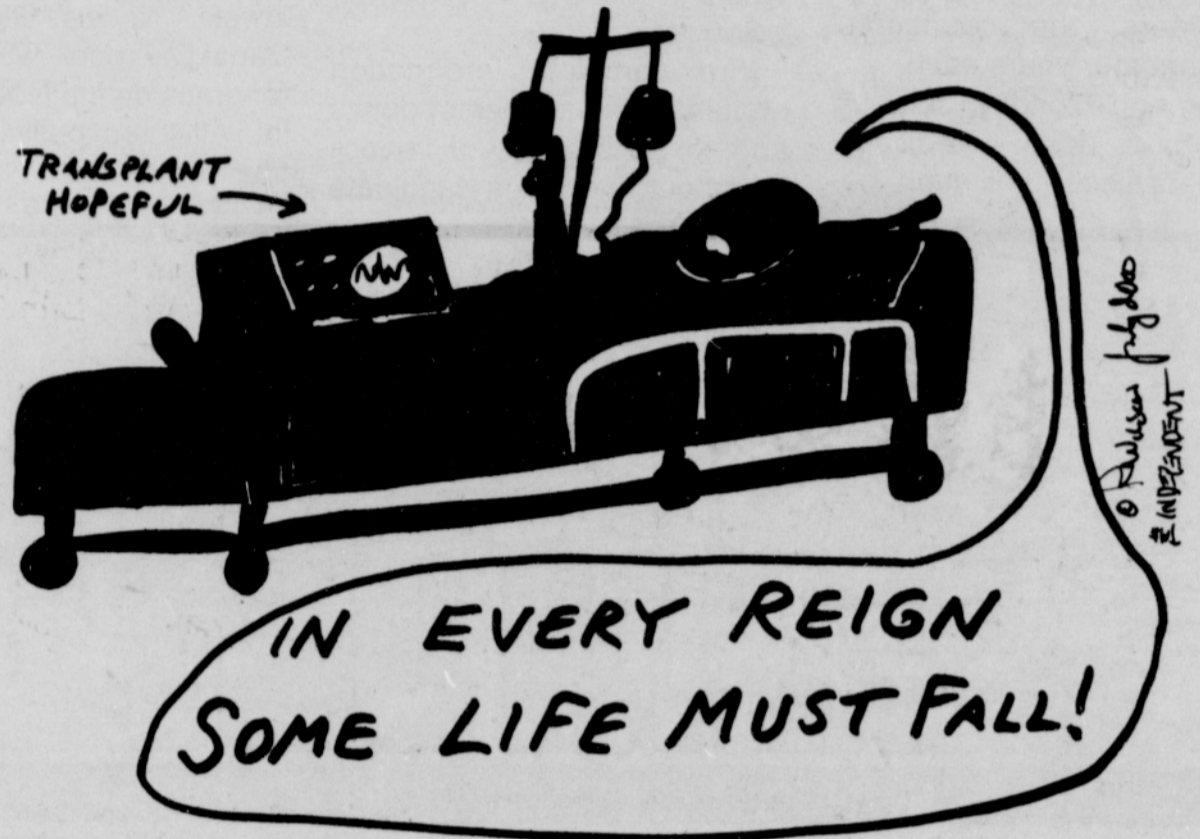
Council posts need candidates

It's easy to complain about what "they" do; it's easy to sit around and gripe. It isn't easy to do the work required of an unpaid city council member or mayor and, sometimes, the grief that comes with these volunteer positions is considerable.

Nevertheless, these positions are important and they need candidates. If you are interested, stop in at your city hall and get some information.

The satisfaction is even greater than the grief.

"In Every Life
Some Rain Must Fall"



Improvements planned for city's parks

For the past decade or more, the parks in Vernonia have taken a back seat to much greater needs, particularly water and sewer infrastructure improvements. That era is past, according to Public Works Director Robyn Bassett, and improvements are being started.

In 1999, the city's Parks System Master Plan was completed. This required the efforts of community volunteers as well as city staff. The volunteer Parks Committee used specific criteria to evaluate each park and provided recommendations to improve conditions of current uses and facilities within the system.

Specific recommendations resulting from the evaluation, and incorporated in the improvement plan are as follows:

Hawkins Park – Beautification of the swimming pool area (this is already well on the way to completion); develop additional parking for park users.

Airport Park – Clear brush and thin trees on east side of park to provide additional primitive camp sites (Bid has been awarded for thinning trees.); construct fire pits at designated camp sites; repair and provide access to all camp sites; develop a hand

pump potable well.

Ora Bolmeier Park – Clear specific trees and underbrush to allow more natural light into the park (Bid has been awarded for removing trees.); create viewing locations with benches; remove stumps at play area to increase the size of the basketball court; provide new play equipment; improve the paths and existing trail system.

Anderson Park – Completion of Linear Trail Extension from Anderson Park to Lake Vernonia (now funded and should start this year); upgrade infrastructure (water, sewer and electricity); build new ADA accessible restrooms with showers, and a multi-use facility including a picnic shelter with cooking facilities. (See related article on page one for RV parking improvements.)

Shay Park – Construct a shelter for the Shay 102 Engine, remove chain link fence and provide a gathering place with gazebo and benches; erect an information kiosk with the history of Shay 102 and a directory of local businesses. It would also be designated as a memorial park.

Lake Vernonia – Expand parking for users; create primitive camping between the

lake and the Nehalem River on the east side of the lake; construct ADA accessible fishing piers (This is now funded and work should be underway soon.); acquire and improve existing boat ramp (the west side of the lake is still in private ownership although it is regularly used by the public.); erect a kiosk to house the history of the Oregon-American Lumber Company mill operation.

Spencer Park – Construct a multi-use sports field that includes two baseball/softball diamonds, with the field area between them designated for other activities such as soccer and football.

Improvements to Vernonia's Parks System have occurred primarily through the efforts of dedicated citizens from Vernonia and throughout the area. They have committed time, equipment and money. The horse arena in Anderson Park is a particularly good example of the community's dedication to outdoor recreation.

In the case of the Parks System, volunteers' efforts are more valuable than they may know because no property tax monies are included in the Parks budget. Actual revenue derives entirely from overnight camping fees collected at Anderson Park, and should improve when bathroom/shower, picnic and cooking facilities are upgraded.

Anyone with questions about the parks plan, or who may be interested in volunteering for a park project should contact Bassett at 429-6921.

A copy of the Vernonia Parks Master Plan is available for review at City Hall during regular working hours.

NOEA grants in tri-county area

From page 1

\$7,500;

- Astoria Trolley Barn;

\$50,000;

- Columbia River Crabbing & Fishing Pier, \$50,000;

- Liberty Theater Thrust Stage, \$50,650;

- Seaside Museum Mural, \$3,125;

- Pacific City Beautification, \$20,000;

- Tillamook Coastal Water-

shed Resource Center, \$30,000;

- Cart'M Recycling Project, \$42,000

- N. Tillamook Community Center, \$30,000;

- Tillamook County Community Clusters, \$30,000;

- Tillamook County Fairgrounds Renovations, \$35,000

- Tillamook County Futures Council, \$5,000;

- Regional Telecommunications Planning, \$25,000.