

WOEC seeks by-laws change, possible expansion

By Jim Buxton

It is not easy to provide services in a rural area, especially in one as sparsely populated as ours. The cost/revenue ratio is usually too low for private enterprise to invest in Rural America. In the '30s, when private companies wired only cities, Congress formed the Rural Electrification Administration (REA), which provided loan funds to rural areas that were not served by private cor-

porations. Coops were formed to provide not only electric service, but also telephone service. As a result, productivity increased, communication improved and society benefitted as a whole.

West Oregon Electric Cooperative (WOEC) has been in existence primarily to provide electric service to the inhabitants of the area, but the Board of Directors from time-to-time has considered broadening the COOP's business line and its

customer base. Early in its existence, refrigerators and stoves could be purchased from the COOP. About ten years ago, WOEC handled Rural Television satellite programming subscriptions. Most recently, the board and staff have been looking into providing high-speed Internet service.

WOEC's attorney, Chuck Fadeley has recommended that the bylaws be amended to "clarify the Cooperative's au-

thority to engage in activities other than electrical service, and provide operational flexibility in a deregulated market, where the Board has determined such participation will benefit the Cooperative."

As a result of this recommendation, the Board voted to conduct a special meeting to allow the membership to amend the by-laws of the cooperative. The meeting will be held at the WOEC board room

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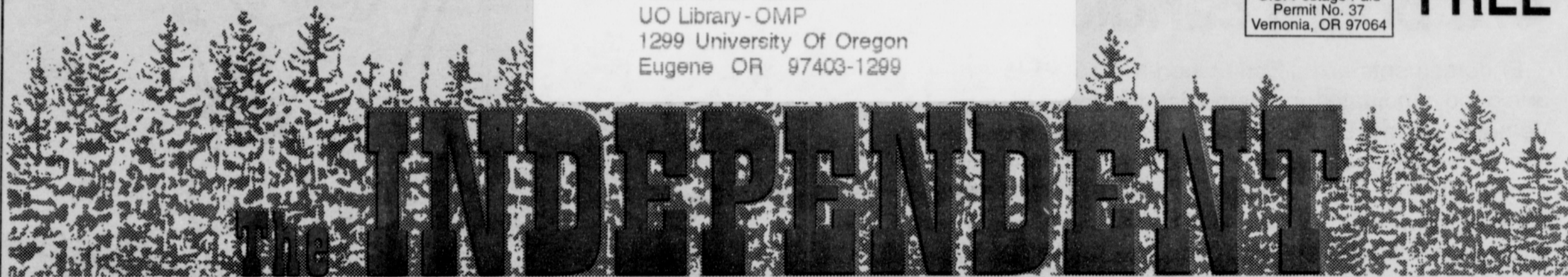
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Looking toward summer



Cold wind and a little snow didn't prevent the installation of two floating piers on Vernonia Lake this month. The piers are handicapped accessible and will allow people with limited agility an opportunity to get safely out on the lake.

City schedules two special meetings

The City of Vernonia invites the public to two special meetings. At the first, a town hall meeting on February 26, results of the recent citizen survey will be discussed.

The meeting will start at 7:00 p.m. in the Scout Cabin in Hawkins Park.

The second meeting, actually a workshop to consider transportation and growth management, will be on Thursday, March 1 at 7:00 p.m., in the City Council chambers in the Vernonia City Hall.

This workshop is a program developed jointly by the Oregon Department of Transportation and the Department of Land Conservation & Develop-

ment.

The Transportation and Growth Management (TGM) program promotes community planning and design that results in compact, transportation-efficient development. The planning ensures pedestrian, bicycle and (as much as possible) transit-friendly options for

Rep. Wu will visit Nehalem valley

Congressman David Wu is spending Thursday and Friday in Clatsop and Columbia Counties and will be stopping in Jewell, Mist and Vernonia on Friday, February 23.

His first stop in the Nehalem Valley will be at Jewell School, where he will address students

local communities.

TGM supports local governments in their efforts to manage growth and provides a variety of grants and technical assistance programs.

This workshop will be presented with both the council and the Vernonia Planning Commission.

during an assembly starting at 1:15 p.m.

From there, he is scheduled for a tour of the Mist-Birkenfeld Fire Station at 2:15 p.m.

He will be at the Scout Cabin in Vernonia at 3:15 p.m. for coffee and conversation. The public is invited to attend.

Candidates express school board views

By Noni Andersen

Anyone who is cynical about either the political process or education should spend some time talking with small town school board candidates. There are differences among them, of course, but it is obvious that they care a great deal about both students and community.

Vernonia School District has an exceptional group of candidates on the March ballot. They all responded to questionnaires from *The Independent* and spoke at a candidates forum on March 12. To avoid repetition, all of the candidates recognized inadequate funding as a major problem.

Jeff Blum
Pos. 7
incumbent

Personal:
Age 39
Married
3 children
Education:
Accounting



and mechanical engineering
Occupation/Background:
For the past 10 years (eight of them in Oregon), he has been Customer Service Engineering Lead for Applied Materials at Intel. Prior experience in construction.

Blum believes that the role of a school board member is to set policy for operations and create a vision for the district. While avoiding micro-managing of daily operations, board members need to take an active role in fiscal responsibility through the budget process.

As a five-year member of the school board, and in his second term as chair, Blum feels there has been significant progress toward district goals but that efforts must be concentrated in two areas particu-

larly - maximum utilization of available funding and increased student achievement.

The district's strengths are in an outstanding teaching staff and a strong administrative staff, said Blum. He has been pleased with improvements in the special education program but says poor communications with the community, and the lack of a significant TAG program must be addressed.

Other involvement in the district includes providing transportation for student activities.

Tom Jones
Pos. 7

Personal:
Age 35
Married to
teacher
2 children
Education:
Dual B.S. in



Agricultural Business Management and Rangeland Resources
Occupation/Background:
Logger for Holce Logging since 1993, U.S. Naval Reserve since 1985.

Beyond the financial restraints, Jones is concerned about the district's physical facilities and overcrowding, plus attracting and keeping high quality educators.

He believes the role of a board member is to be an eye, ear and voice for the community and represent the views of all taxpayers. He also wants to enhance the educational experience of the children and their educators.

The district's strengths are the people, Jones says, both employees and community members, as well as its size and isolation. He also cited communication as a weakness

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