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# The INDEPENDENT

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"Voice of the Upper Nehalem River Valley"

March 20, 2002

## A late snow



A March 17 snowfall made fence posts at the Anderson Park horse corral look very much like popsicle sticks with a topping of whipped cream.

## 47J gets good audit report

The Vernonia School District Board of Directors heard the auditor's report, interviewed and appointed budget committee members, discussed the architect's contract, exchange student programs and much more on March 12. They were also engrossed by two presentations. Lincoln Elementary School presented their traditional "100 Days" projects, followed by a presentation on the high school Youth Transition Program.

The district's new auditor Larry Grant, of Grove, Mueller & Swank, P.C., has completed a thorough analysis of all of the district's funds and accounting operations. According to Grant, the auditor's opinion of the dis-

trict's fiscal operations was "clean, with nothing out of the ordinary" in all aspects. Grant concluded by reporting on an upcoming change in accounting procedures that will make the school's financial statements more consistent with those used in business. The change will take place over the next five years.

The board interviewed four candidates for budget committee, Jeff Blum, Gregory Kintz, Noni Andersen and Darlene McLeod. Blum, who recently resigned as a board member, Andersen and McLeod have served on the budget committee previously. Kintz has been an Outdoor School instructor and WGS Site Council mem-

ber. The board appointed Andersen, Blum and Kintz to the 14 member budget committee, which also includes the seven board members. Budget committee meetings will begin soon.

Superintendent Larry McClellan presented the board with an extension of the architect's retainer contract. Costs for this contract are charged to the capital reserve fund, which can be used only for projects relating to building improvement or replacement. According to McClellan, since the district now has on file documents establishing that the district's buildings are not safe, maintaining an ongoing relationship

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## City, garbage hauler reach rate agreement

After months of negotiations between the City of Vernonia and Waste Management of Oregon, agreement has been reached that will increase garbage rates by six percent. The garbage hauler initially requested a rate increase of 10 percent, plus a contract that would allow them to increase rates any time that their margin of profit fell below 10 percent. That proposal was sufficient to initiate informal talks about a municipal garbage service.

The six percent approved by the Vernonia City Council, following a public hearing on March 18, has two elements. It includes a two percent increase in the franchise fee paid by Waste Management to the City of Vernonia, plus a flat four percent increase in rates. The franchise fee is now five percent.

Under the new rates, the residential rate for weekly, one can service will be \$17.42 per month. Commercial rate for the same service will be \$18.36 per month.

In addition to the usual one can per week residential service, residents have several different options, including monthly, every other week and will call pick-up. There is a list of commercial options, as well.

Following adoption of the new rates, City Administrator Mike Sykes told councilors that a letter was just received from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, objecting to the City's practice of granting a senior and disabled citizen discount on water and sewer rates. Sykes will contact the USDA official for more information.

Council also heard an informal presentation from Alan Bogner, Department of Environmental Quality project manager for the Environmental Partnerships for Oregon Com-

munities (EPOC) program. Bogner explained the Mutual Agreement and Order (MAO) between DEQ and the City of Vernonia regarding wastewater discharge into the Nehalem River and required upgrades to the city's wastewater treatment facility. Completion dates are near for different phases of the project and the city will have to work very closely with DEQ to meet all requirements.

Council also held a Public Hearing on amendments to the City's Transportation System Plan (TSP). The proposed amendments are primarily "housekeeping" changes needed to coordinate and comply with state planning requirements. The hearing will be kept open for written testimony until April 15, 2002.

Council will tour the city Water Plant, April 15 at 6:00 p.m. The public is invited to join in.

## Easter Egg Hunt set for Saturday, 10 a.m.

Get Ready...Get Set...Go to the annual Vernonia Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday, March 30 in Hawkins Park.

So nobody will be left out, children will be separated into four age groups, from 0-3 years (adult help allowed for toddlers), 4-6 years, 7-8 years and 9-10 years. Families are advised to arrive early, as the action will begin at 10 a.m., sharp!

Following the hunt, the Easter Bunny will be in the Scout Cabin with a bag of treats for each child.

The event is sponsored by the Vernonia Area Chamber of Commerce. Vernonia Sentry Market is donating the eggs and volunteers will boil and dye the eggs. For more information, call Dolly Keenon at 503-429-3401.