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The INDEPENDENT

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"Voice of the Upper Nehalem River Valley"

June 6, 2002

Cutting remarks...



The ribbon fell as Alice and Hollie Pihl officially opened the Whistle Stop Shelter at the Buxton Trailhead of the Banks-Vernonia State Trail. Looking on is Michael Carrier, Director of Oregon Parks & Recreation Department.

Pihls honored for trail improvements

Hollie and Alice Pihl, of Buxton, supported creation of the Banks-Vernonia Linear Park when it was still a controversial idea. Their support has never wavered and the most recent beneficial result is a large, comfortable picnic shelter at the Buxton Trailhead.

The Pihls' contribution toward the shelter was in the form of a challenge grant to the Oregon State Parks Trust, which raised an additional \$12,000 for the project with a grant from the Higgins Charitable Trust. The state trust is dedicated to preserving and im-

proving Oregon's park system.

In addition to the Pihls, others were recognized for their contributions to improving the Banks-Vernonia Trail.

They included Sharon Leighty of the Oregon State Parks Trust, for a significant role in developing the successful public/private project;

Larry Hurley of Longview Fibre, for the company's donation of profits from windblown logs;

Larry Matson of Matson Tree Farms, for donating land needed for easier trailhead access; and Washington County Commissioner Andy Duyck for as-

School programs retained, but budget forces cuts in sports

"In our district we are very fortunate to have an exceptional, caring, and dedicated staff that focus all their energies on the youth of the community. However, even the most talented staff needs adequate supplies, equipment and a safe, clean, appropriate environment to do their best work. Unfortunately, the level of funding we are receiving does not support that and we are not able to provide the education our students deserve."

This statement in the budget message by retiring Vernonia School District Superintendent Larry McClellan summed up the feelings of the entire budget committee, as they very reluctantly passed the proposed budget. School board member Jim Krahn noted, when he made the final motion for the committee at their May 30 meeting, that the proposed 2002-2003 budget directly reflects this under-funding and the committee wanted to make a strong statement to the public that they do not approve of the cuts forced upon the district by the lack of revenue coming from the state.

Reductions needed to balance the 2002-03 fiscal year budget include the following:

At the high school level, two sports activities will be cut — cross-country and golf — plus a half-time attendance position and a half-time custodian.

At the elementary level, a custodian will be cut, Lincoln School will have one less instructional aide, the stipend for a Jr. High leadership coach is gone and a scheduled textbook adoption will be postponed.

District-wide cuts include the computer technician (This work is supposed to be performed under a contract with NWRES that should reduce costs by about \$20,000), and a half-time maintenance person. Supplies and resources will be very tight throughout the system.

The uppermost considera-

tion at all levels, was to leave programs undisturbed.

The budget committee made the following recommendations to the board:

That the district inventory and identify surplus equipment. Any surplus equipment found should be sold, with the proceeds set aside towards the purchase of textbooks and future adoptions.

If further reductions are needed, the committee approved three reduction levels as guides to be used by the board as a starting point. The potential reductions depend on future state funding. They are discussed in a related article on page 10. Further, the committee recommended that additional input be included at the time, if reductions need to be implemented.

Leonetti resigns, Ball is sworn in, vacancy exists

The mayor's gavel changed hands at the Vernonia City Council meeting May 20, when Mayor Mario Leonetti resigned and Council President Cindy Ball was sworn in as mayor.

In a moving and personal address to the Council and audience, Leonetti cited his family's need for services not available in Columbia County as the reason for relocating to Washington County.

Associated with Vernonia in various volunteer positions since 1983, Leonetti said he was comfortable leaving because of a competent council, city staff and new mayor.

Speaking of the council, Leonetti noted they are "...enthusiastic, though not always serious. They keep Vernonia in their hearts and have given serious thought to issues facing

the city."

Council is now seeking a person to fill the remaining six months of Ball's council position. Any registered voter living within the Vernonia City limits for the past twelve months may apply for the Council vacancy. Applications may be obtained at Vernonia City Hall, 1001 Bridge Street, Vernonia, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Completed applications must be submitted to the City Recorder at Vernonia City Hall no later than 5:00 p.m. on June 27.

Council will interview all candidates during a July 8 special council meeting. In addition to the interview, all candidates will be given an opportunity to give a three-minute speech stating why they would like to serve as a City Councilor.

stance with permit and land use procedures.

Speakers for the event were Michael Carrier, Director of Oregon Parks & Recreation Department, Ron Johnson, president of the Friends of the Banks-Vernonia Trail, and outdoor reporter Grant McOmie.

Council changes date of next meeting

Vernonia City Council has changed the date of their next meeting. The meeting scheduled for July 1 will be postponed until July 8