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The INDEPENDENT

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"Voice of the Upper Nehalem River Valley"

September 5, 2002

Mural in the Making...



Art in the Park, a day-long activity sponsored by the Hands On Art Committee, was sometimes messy, always creative and lots of fun for children and adults who made musical instruments, created murals, learned flower arranging, made collages, practiced improvisational drama and were entertained by musicians during lunch. Hawkins Park was the center of activities for the event. More photos on page 10.

Water curtailment measures approved

A collaborative effort by the City of Vernonia, Upper Nehalem Watershed Council, State Watermaster, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Izaak Walton League has resulted in the adoption, by the city council, of water curtailment measures that can be instituted in case of a drought.

Based on instream water rights and measurable stream flow (cubic feet of stream flow per second, or cfs) in Rock Creek, the resolution has four low-flow levels of concern:

1. 14 cfs will trigger a request for voluntary reduction in water use, with a warning that mandatory cutbacks will be required if water usage is not reduced by 20 percent within 14 days.

2. 12 cfs will cause prohibition of certain uses, such as washing cars, sidewalks or parking lots, and filling swim-

ming pools.

3. 10 cfs will trigger restriction of all outside water use.

4. At 8 cfs or if the state declares a drought emergency, a maximum daily allotment of water per resident would be instituted.

Violations of measures 2, 3 and 4 would include penalties such as fines and/or disconnection of water service for serious violators.

The watershed council and the city have applied to the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board for a grant to purchase a stream flow gauge. At this time, the only way to get an accurate measurement is to have the watermaster bring gauging equipment to Vernonia. This was done in September 2001, when flow in Rock Creek measured 12.5 cfs.

Drought was not a consideration on August 5, when .75 of

an inch of rain fell in one hour, causing temporary flooding throughout downtown and in some residential areas. Some residents of upper Bridge Street had water in their homes because drainage ditches and culverts were blocked or eliminated by recent paving. The city will be fixing the problem.

School starts cutting more out of budget

Budget issues dominated the Vernonia School District Board of Directors meeting August 22, in both public and executive sessions. After convening the public meeting, the board recessed to resume an earlier executive session on a possible staff reduction.

Returning to the public meeting, the board approved reducing administrative staff by one full-time position and directed the superintendent to restructure the administrative team. (Subsequent to that decision, the position held by administrator Jane McClellan was eliminated, with those duties to be assigned to other administrators.)

Superintendent Mike Funderburg told the board that, since the end of the 2001 legislative session, resources budgeted for K-12 schools have been reduced by \$198 million, or \$74 per student in the Vernonia district. Resources still at risk include Ballot Measure 19—\$150 million statewide, or \$230 per student in Vernonia—plus any additional cuts that may be required because of an anticipated shortfall in the September revenue forecast.

[Governor John Kitzhaber announced August 27 that the projected shortfall had reached

\$482 million, of which \$202 million would come from the State School Fund. This would mean an additional statewide cut of \$302 per student.]

On a brighter note, Funderburg said he had reached an informal agreement with Superintendent John Seeley of the Jewell School District, to divide the state school funds between the two districts equitably.

Funderburg also reported that he is working with staff to develop a complaint and grievance system for both staff and public concerns.

In other business the board:

- Agreed to continue operating with board goals adopted several years ago.

- Reviewed the special meeting policy to bring it into compliance with state law.

- Decided to hold future board meetings in the high school library, to allow additional room for the public.

- Directed district staff to bring all future grant applications before the board for approval before submission, in order to keep the board informed of efforts to obtain outside revenue.

Editor's Note:

All estimates of funding per student are based on the Average Daily Membership (weighted) or ADMw. Criteria for ADMw include estimates of enrollment, "weighted" with allowances for special education students, pregnant and parenting students, poverty, students in foster care and schools in remote locations. For example, the estimated attendance in the Vernonia School District for 2003 is 740 students but, after adjustment by the weighting formula, the district has an ADMw of 967 students. The same criteria are used to weight student populations throughout the state.

County plans Sept. 11 ceremony

The Columbia County Board of Commissioners will host a memorial at Columbia View Park in St. Helens on September 11, 2002, at 12:15 p.m. Law enforcement, district fire personnel, national guard, Red Cross and VFW Posts from all over Columbia County will participate.

The 45 minute memorial event will include a welcome by Columbia County Board of Commissioners Chairman Tony Hyde; a salute to the flag, musical tribute, and words of remembrance by Columbia County Sheriff Phil Derby and Columbia River Fire & Rescue Chief George Dunkel.

The Columbia County Court House will be closed from 12:00 to 1:00 p.m. on Sept. 11.

For more information, call Janet Wright at 503-397-1035 or Debbie Rogers at 503-366-4066.