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The INDEPENDENT

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Fire destroys home



Some weary firefighters pause while others have donned breathing apparatus in preparation for entering the home of Jake and Cathy Wolfe, which burned Tuesday morning. Story on page 5.

Ballots include mix of office seekers

Most voters in Columbia and Clatsop Counties will see an unusual ballot: The candidates go beyond the usual Democrat and Republican nominees to include Libertarians, Constitution Party and independents.

In Columbia County, Democrat incumbent Rita Bernhard will face two challengers for Commissioner Position 2 — Constitution Party candidate

Joe Cason and Cathy (Beatley) Taylor, an independent.

A similar situation exists in State House District 31 (formerly District 1), where a Democratic incumbent, Betsey Johnson, is being challenged by Constitution Party nominee Bob Ekstrom and independent Mervyn Arnold.

House District 32, which is centered in Tillamook County,

but includes part of Columbia and Clatsop Counties, is more traditional, with only two candidates, Democratic incumbent Elaine Hopson and Republican Joe Meyer.

Joan Dukes, a Democrat, who has represented Senate District 16 since 1987, will face Republican Don Fell and Libertarian Helen McDaniel.

Columbia County voters will also see Ballot Measure 5-109, which seeks approval for a five-year local option levy for law enforcement. If approved the levy will cost \$0.88 per thousand of assessed value (\$88.00 per \$100,000 of assessed value) for five years. The funds will go the Sheriff's Department for patrol and jail operations.

Two needed for planning commission

With the appointment of Brett Costley to the Vernonia City Council and the resignation of Bob Wagner, two people are needed to bring the Vernonia Planning Commission back to full strength. Wagner resigned because traveling keeps him away from Vernonia

for extended periods, making it difficult to keep up with the work.

The planning commission reviews land use and zoning applications and makes recommendations to the city council. It is voluntary and usually meets only once each month.

Mold investigation finds major dry rot

Vernonia School District's Board of Directors, union representatives and members of the public toured Washington Grade School as part of a long-awaited maintenance committee report, during the September 26 board workshop. Following the tour, there was lengthy discussion about how to approach the district's facilities dilemma. As Superintendent Mike Funderburg told the board, "... the mold at WGS might be the least of the district's facility issues."

Mold growth uncovered

Directing the tour, Maintenance Supervisor John Lewis showed the board some of the areas where long-standing water damage had resulted in mold growth. Eight of the areas were tested by Clayton Group Services (CGS) representative Kathie Lavaty, with four of the samples suggesting fungal growth or contamination, according to the CGS report. None of the samples tested were from areas of the building occupied by students. After considerable discussion with Lavaty, Funderburg said, it appears that nearly all of the mold can be eliminated.

Funderburg recommended that two areas of particular concern be closed off. The first, a small storage area adjacent to a room currently used as a game room, is underneath the front steps at WGS and shows significant evidence of continued water leakage from an unknown source. The second area, next to the music room, is also used for storage. The room has a labeled, but apparently unsealed, asbestos ceiling that would prevent that area from being adequately cleaned.

Dry rot exposed

In preparing for the CGS study, Lewis and Funderburg

told the board, portions of walls and ceilings were removed where mold growth was suspected, which resulted in the exposure of numerous areas of significant dry rot caused by decades of water damage to the wooden structure inside the brick walls. Funderburg told the board that previous engineering studies, completed in May of 2001, were conducted to assess seismic safety and to review mechanical (heating and plumbing) and electrical systems at both WGS and the high school. Lewis showed the tour group several examples of water damage in unreinforced masonry walls that appear to be bowing into the building. Teacher Cathy Ward told the group that several classrooms at WGS have areas in the walls that show daylight through them or where outside air comes in. Lewis also showed the tour group a sample of roofing material that appears to have been incorrectly installed.

Mold remediation

Funderburg told the board that Lewis will continue with clean-up of mold-contaminated areas, remove supplies so the supply room can be closed off, close the game room storage area and try to determine where water is entering. Following the cleanup, CGS will again conduct air quality testing. Lewis will also work to increase outside air circulation and improve indoor air quality by ensuring that windows open. He assured the board that the WGS boiler could provide adequate heat for students even with windows open in winter. According to Funderburg, these activities should be completed within the next thirty days.

After considerable discussion, Funderburg summarized

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