

Attn: Leslie Larson
UO Library - OMP
1299 University Of Oregon
Eugene OR 97403-1299

PRESORTED STANDARD
U.S. Postage Paid
Vernonia, OR 97064

FREE

The INDEPENDENT

Vol. 18, No. 3

"Voice of the Upper Nehalem River Valley"

February 6, 2003

Winging it...



Caught in flight by photographer Clark McGaugh, one of the resident Great Blue Herons takes off across Vernonia Lake.

"Futures" committee looks at schools

The Futures Committee, a community group concerned about the future of education in Vernonia, made a presentation to the school board at their January meeting. Initiated by Michelle Blum, Marie Botchie, Cari Levenseller, Carla Strand, Mike Funderburg and Robyn Cochran, the group decided that its first project would be to determine how to address the schools' facility needs.

Acting as the group's historian, Botchie has gathered available documentation including engineering reports, pre- and post-bond surveys, a facility grant application, and other information used in the unsuccessful 2001 effort to gain voter support for a bond measure.

In a written statement presented at the board meeting, Blum said the group recognizes the problems identified in the previous effort and will "create and facilitate opportunities to learn about what we may or may not need and what action we (as a community) want to be taken regarding another bond effort."

In addition to seeking solutions to previously identified mechanical and structural problems, the committee will attempt to answer questions raised after the previous bond effort, including:

- What can the community afford?
- What options are there regarding school location and po-

tential future flooding?

- What are the advantages or disadvantages to combining grade levels in one facility?

The committee's statement says, "Our downtown area revitalizes, while our schools stagnate" and goes on to question how teachers and students can be asked to teach and learn for the information age in an inadequate facility.

The committee is seeking participation from additional volunteers. According to Blum, the core group will serve as the "vehicle of communication" between the community and the board by collecting information and opinions and reporting to the board on a monthly basis.

Please see page 8

Hwy. 47 project back on schedule for 2004

In 2002, the Nehalem River Highway (Hwy. 47) was scheduled for resurfacing from the north end of Vernonia city limits to Hwy 26. It didn't happen and the project was moved to 2003, but it won't be done in 2003, either. Then, when Vernonia Public Works Director Robyn Bassett looked at the projects scheduled for 2004, it had disappeared from the schedule.

At the February 3 meeting of the Vernonia City Council, Bassett reported that, as of January 31, the project is scheduled for 2004. In addition to resurfacing, many culverts will be replaced, some bridge work and erosion control is needed, and a bike path will be constructed along Bridge Street from Washington Grade School up O-A Hill to the Nehalem River bridge.

The revised schedule has a bid date in late September, with work to begin in the spring of 2004...if it doesn't fall off the calendar again.

The committee reviewing the 28 applications for Vernonia Chief of Police selected eight applicants for the second

phase of the process. City Administrator Mike Sykes told the council that five of the eight had responded positively within a week. The three remaining applicants hadn't responded in that time frame.

Sykes also told of finding letters dated in 1921 and 1922 detailing some rather acrimonious negotiations between the city and a representative of Oregon-American Lumber Co. regarding conditions for siting a mill in Vernonia. Copies of the correspondence were given to council members and the originals were entrusted to the Vernonia Pioneer Museum, which is appropriately located in the former O-A Mill office.

Three public hearings were scheduled: On March 17 to review an amendment to the City's Transportation System Plan; April 7 to consider annexation of cemetery property, and a second on April 7 to consider an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan.

Because February 17 is a holiday, the next meeting of the council will be on Tuesday, February 18, at 7:00 p.m.

Some WOEC bills estimated

By Jim Buxton

The West Oregon Electric Cooperative Board of Directors were told at their January meeting that approximately one-third of the members will receive estimated bills for January. Operations Manager Steve Hirsch said that, for various reasons, WOEC was too short-handed to read all the meters as it usually does.

Every effort was made to arrive at an accurate estimate based on the previous three months usage, as well as usage during the same month one year ago. Any differences will even out on the following bill, when WOEC expects to

read all the meters on schedule, calculate two months usage and subtract the estimate.

The system is being converted to automated meter reading. Meters in some of the outlying areas are already converted.

Please see page 13

Blood Drive slated

Roll up your sleeve for a Red Cross Blood Drive sponsored by the Vernonia High School Leadership Class, February 19 from 1:30 to 6:30 p.m., in the VHS Library.

Donors must be age 17 or older and weigh at least 110 pounds. The goal is 55 donors.