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# The INDEPENDENT

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"Voice of the Upper Nehalem River Valley"

August 21, 2003

## Living History...



At the Nehalem River Rendezvous during the Vernonia Jamboree, this youngster was learning how to shoot with an old rifle. The support provided by two slender wooden poles helped him maintain a balance for the heavy, old-fashioned firearm.

## Mars & Stars gathering next Tuesday

Never again in your lifetime will the Red Planet be so spectacular. This month and next, Earth is catching up with Mars, an encounter that will culminate in the closest approach between the two planets in recorded history.

The next time Mars may come this close is in 2287. Due to the way Jupiter's gravity tugs on Mars and disturbs its orbit, astronomers can be certain only that Mars has not come this close to Earth in the last 5,000 years, but it may have been as long as 60,000 years.

The encounter will culminate Tuesday, August 26, when Mars will be within 34,649,589 miles of earth and, next to the moon, will be the brightest object in the night sky.

Vernonia residents Jim Buxton and Robb Wilson are organizing a Mars & Stars gathering

on the Vernonia High School grounds and urge everyone interested to join in the event. Anyone with telescopic equipment is invited to set up with the others. Mars will not be easily visible Tuesday until about 9:30 p.m., but those who arrive earlier can still enjoy a good time for star gazing.

At a modest 75-power magnification Mars will look as large as the full moon to the naked eye, and it will be easy to spot. At the beginning of August, Mars rose in the east at 10 p.m. and reached its azimuth at about 3:00 a.m.

By the end of the month, when the two planets are closest, Mars will rise at nightfall and reach its highest point in the sky at 12:30 a.m.

That's pretty convenient when it comes to seeing something that no human has seen

in recorded history. So, take this opportunity to share with your children and grandchildren. No one alive today will ever see this again.

## State adopts park name suggested by Vernonia man

Greg Kintz, of Vernonia, has received word that the state Park Commission has adopted the name "Hares Canyon State Park" for the park being developed in Buxton. Kintz was informed of the decision because he suggested the name early in the process, at the second public hearing in Hillsboro.

The highway sign for the park will show Hares Canyon State Park, with another sign under that noting the Banks-Vernonia State Trail.

## "Smart Growth" and law enforcement continue to keep council occupied

After nearly two years of study, numerous reconsiderations and months of fine tuning, the basis for a revised planning ordinance has received approval from the Vernonia City Council, the Vernonia Planning Commission and citizens who have been involved during all or part of the effort.

The final public hearing on elements of a Smart Growth planning ordinance was held August 18 - this was not a hearing on the ordinance, but on the elements that will be included in the ordinance.

Many of the questions from those in attendance dealt with parking in the downtown area, a subject that was deliberately omitted, at this time, because parking for downtown businesses needs further study.

Another frequently expressed concern was about the boundary of the downtown business zone. This was also specifically omitted so the elements of the future Smart Growth ordinance could be explained to property owners on the fringes of downtown. Only after those contacts have been made, and responses have been evaluated, will the boundary be delineated.

No date was set for consideration of a draft ordinance.

## Town Hall date selected

In response to many requests at the August 4 council meeting - attended by nearly 200 people, at least 30 of whom spoke, mostly unfavorably, about overaggressive law enforcement during Jamboree - the council set September 22 as the date for a community/town hall meeting on law enforcement. The time and location will be announced well in advance of the meeting.

Though some in the audience continued to make statements of criticism or praise about Police Chief Mike Cahill, Mayor Cindy Ball and council members asked them to follow up at the town hall meeting so all concerns and points of view about local law enforcement can be considered.

Ray Foster, who closed his bar over Jamboree weekend because of what he felt were intimidating tactics by Chief Cahill, objected. "This isn't about law enforcement," Foster said, "this is about firing Cahill."

Council members implied that they were not interested in going through another lengthy search for a police chief.

Garrett Abney suggested development of an emergency response team, not to work exclusively with the police department, but to be available for any type of emergency that occurs, man-made or otherwise.

At the mayor's request, Lisa Orth, who is the Vernonia contact person for the American Red Cross, explained her role in local emergencies. Mayor Ball also explained recent efforts by existing emergency response planners to get others involved, though the efforts have been mostly unsuccessful.

## Keasey-Stoney Point intersection discussed

Administrator Mike Sykes reported on efforts to get cooperation from Columbia County to mitigate traffic danger at the intersection of Stoney Point Road and Keasey Road.

Because of increasing traffic, there are far more "near misses" and there have been some major accidents there, as well. Roadmaster Dave Hill feels it is a City problem although the intersection is in the county.