

# The INDEPENDENT

Serving the upper Nehalem River valley. Published twice monthly, on the first and third Thursdays of each month, by Public Opinion Laboratory Ltd., 725 Bridge Street, Vernonia, OR 97064, as a free newspaper. Publishers, Dirk & Noni Andersen. Editor, Noni Andersen. Phone/Fax: 503-429-9410, e-mail: noni@vernonia.com Display Advertising, Clark Mc-Gaugh, 503-429-9410, e-mail: clark@vernonia.com

## Opinion

### Mutual need: People and Columbia County 9-1-1

People who don't trust government or who think all taxes are bad, should look closely at the Columbia 9-1-1 Emergency Dispatch district. The district was formed with a very small tax base and the directors told Columbia County residents that the base would not be sufficient for the growth and technological changes needed.

They planned to seek an increased tax base when necessary, but changes in the way districts are financed also changed their plans. Since then, the district has functioned, remarkably well, with five-year operating levys.

Columbia 9-1-1 is truly county-wide, providing service to the Nehalem Valley which is identical to that received by all other areas of the county. In the Nehalem valley, there are no urgent care clinics, there aren't even any doctors. When we need emergency medical services we call 9-1-1. When we need the fire or police departments, we call 9-1-1.

There is no need to detail the work done by Columbia 9-1-1, enough letters in this issue have done that for us. So, if you're not sure how this levy will affect you, please read the letters.

It makes no difference how much we *claim* to support Columbia 9-1-1. We must *show* our support by VOTING. If we do not meet the double majority requirement – more than 50% of registered voters casting a ballot, and more than 50% of those voting to approve the levy – we will cripple not just 9-1-1, but our own emergency services.

There is, however, one unusual characteristic in this levy request. It doesn't ask for an increased amount, but is slightly *less* than we are now paying!

We urge a YES vote to renew the 5-year operating levy for Columbia 9-1-1 Emergency Dispatch.

#### — NOTICE —

The INDEPENDENT is published on the first and third Thursdays of each month. There are five Thursdays in October, so there will be three weeks between the issue of October 16 and the issue of November 6.

To provide some break time for our staff, the office will be closed from October 22 through October 27. Messages may be left via fax or voice mail at 503-429-9410, or by e-mail to noni@vernonia.com or clark@vernonia.com

Deadline for the issue of November 6 will be October 31.



## Letters

### Columbia 9-1-1 does job well, efficiently

As a first responder to fires and emergency medical calls, and as Mist-Birkenfeld Fire Chief, I have firsthand knowledge of the vital role of Columbia 9-1-1 Communications District and its dispatchers in coordinating all of the public safety agencies throughout the county. Not only do we benefit from outstanding, highly trained, professional dispatch and coordination, but the taxpayers benefit too. That's because as an independent agency, Columbia 9-1-1's 15 dispatchers are on the job 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It would take 75+ people and a lot more money to do that same job if each fire, police or emergency medical service had its own dispatchers.

In addition, as chairman for the 9-1-1 District's Advisory Board, I have the benefit of a unique perspective on Columbia 9-1-1. With members representing each of the 16 law enforcement, fire, emergency medical and support agencies in the county, our Advisory Board's purpose is to work with and advise the elected volunteer 9-1-1 Board of Directors.

Working together, we have been able to take the coordination and cooperation 9-1-1 provides on emergency calls to a new level. We meet with 9-1-1 regularly, to exchange information, provide analysis and critiques, take part in additional training, anticipate and prevent problems – in other words, work together to make sure the citizens of Columbia County receive the best emergency response possible. Reliable 9-1-1 communications allows emergency service agencies to work more closely together, using fewer resources and providing services we otherwise could not afford. We all do our jobs better when we coordinate, and that means we can serve you better.

In November, Columbia 9-1-1 is taking another huge step in providing the best possible communication coordination, when the new Public Safety, Microwave Radio System goes into operation. To us, that means there will no longer be "dead zones" where we are out of touch with dispatchers, each other, or you, the people we're trying to help. To you, it means an even greater level of safety, protection and emergency re-

sponse, especially since the microwave system won't have the same problems with floods and things that affect phone lines. Here's the icing on the microwave radio cake – it was paid for using \$1.4 million in federal grants – not by those of us who live here. That was a promise Columbia 9-1-1 made, and it's a promise delivered.

I am pleased, and proud, to serve on the Columbia 9-1-1 Advisory Board, and to work with Columbia 9-1-1 every single day.

Chief Dave Crawford  
Mist

### Efficient emergency response is the goal

As your elected representatives for Columbia 9-1-1 Communications District, we represent every community within our county. We get help from a 9-1-1 Advisory Board that includes someone from every fire district and emergency medical agency, and law enforcement agency. Together, we make sure 9-1-1 emergency response is always working to get better, with one goal in mind: to provide the best, most

Please see page 3