

The INDEPENDENT

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"Voice of the Upper Nehalem River Valley"

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Signs of the times!



This sign isn't intended as a prediction, but it's just about right. There will be construction workers and flaggers and lots of signs along Highway 47, from Vernonia to Hwy 26.

Economic Development group selects projects

Approximately 20 people have stayed with the process of economic development that was started at a town hall meeting last fall.

Now they have decided to continue work and/or research in four primary areas:

- Fixing up empty or run-down buildings with paint and getting permission from owners to put interesting displays in the windows of empty buildings.

- Researching the feasibility of an Urban Renewal District (URD) for possible industrial park development or downtown improvements.

- Marketing Vernonia and

building on tourism and outdoor recreation.

- Helping local businesses through a Business Assistance Team and educational resources.

The group will meet again on Monday, February 23, at the Scout Cabin in Hawkins Park, to select strategies for the four areas.

The goal of the group's efforts is to strengthen the existing businesses in Vernonia, bring in new businesses and increase local employment opportunities.

Anyone interested in this effort is welcome to join in.

Hwy 47 repaving project begins

It's going to be painful, but it will be so nice when it's done.

No, not a trip to the dentist, but a major resurfacing of Highway 47 from Highway 26 to the north city limit of Vernonia.

Depending on weather and on what kind of soil is found when the old paving is removed, traffic delays will get:

1. Better
2. Worse
3. Stay about the same

Take your pick and you're likely to be right, because one of those conditions will be the right choice at any given time, as about 70 people learned at a City of Vernonia/ODOT town hall meeting, February 17.

Matthew Garrett, Region I Manager for the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT), gave a brief overview of the highway preservation project that will start at the north end of Vernonia and go approximately 17 miles to Highway 26.

The project will include an overlay and approximately 20 culverts. Of particular value to Vernonia will be a new bike path alongside the highway from Washington Grade School to the museum parking lot.

The new path will be wider, requiring pile driving and fill. It will include a wall on the outside (downhill side) plus the divider between the path and traffic lanes. The path will be closed at all times during construction, requiring people to use another route.

Vehicular traffic on that section will be controlled by 24-hour flaggers while it is under construction.

Sen. Wyden will be in county Sunday

U.S. Senator Ron Wyden will hold a town hall meeting Sunday, February 22, in St. Helens. The meeting will be from 4:00 to 5:30 p.m. at the Columbia Center, 375 S. 18th Street.

While it is almost impossible to eliminate the loss of parking on Bridge Street during construction, ODOT and their contractor, R.L. Houck, of Salem, agreed to start the downtown work as soon as possible, in an effort to have downtown open by the end of April. Subsurface concrete must be removed from the four-block downtown section, another potential road-closing situation.

If it is necessary to close that part of Bridge Street, it is likely that Maple Street will be used as an alternative.

Commuters will experience delays on Hwy. 47 and some may find it useful to use Timber Road, even though that adds a few miles to a trip to the Hillsboro or Portland area.

Residents whose driveways may be blocked at times, may call in advance and to let the construction crew know when it is necessary to get in and out. It is not likely that driveways will be blocked for lengthy periods.

There will be many more

questions before the job is done. Call 503-223-0066 for recorded information; report project issues to 503-620-1420, a 24-hour hotline. More information is on the web at <<http://www.odot.state.or.us/region1>>.

Hwy. 47 in Banks will be paved, too

Not long after hearing, again, that Banks Main Street, Highway 47, was not scheduled for repaving, Banks council members were delighted at Mayor Bob Orłowski's announcement, Feb. 10, that the long overdue job would be completed this summer. The \$550,000 project was among those authorized by the legislative emergency board. It will extend from Wilkesborough Road to the north end of town. The Sellers Road realignment will also begin this summer, along with completion of the Banks-Vernonia Linear Park into the city.



Ron DePue, construction supervisor for R.L. Houck, won the crowd over with his straightforward answers to every question.