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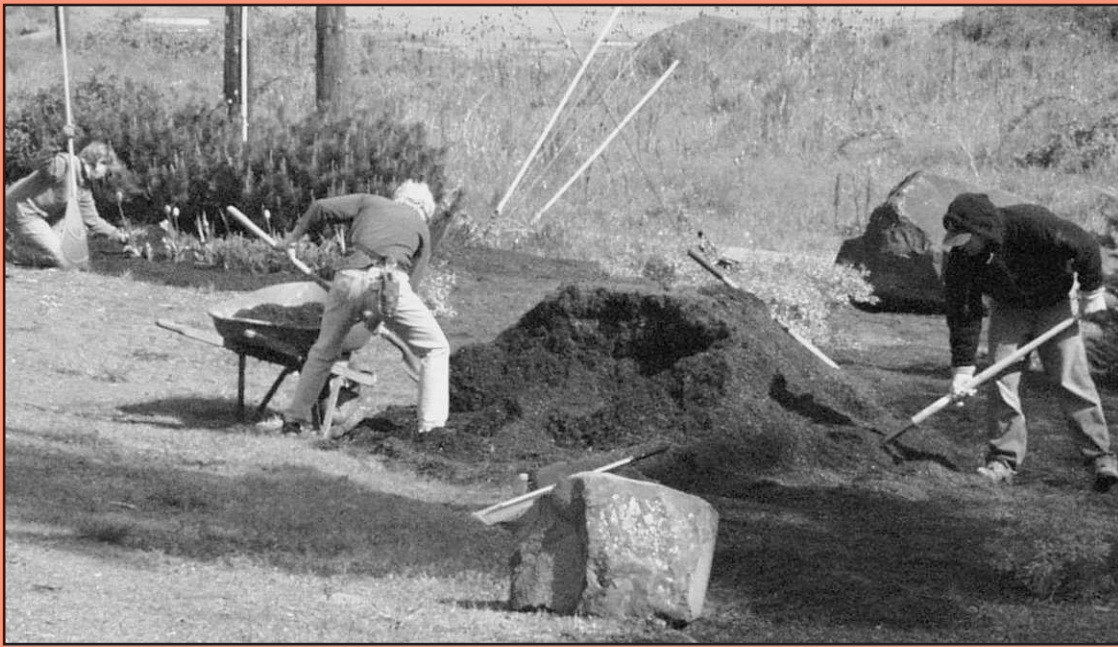
The INDEPENDENT

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"Voice of the Upper Nehalem River Valley"

May 6, 2004

A Group Effort



Lots of people supplied lots of muscle and energy on Vernonia's annual Clean-up Day. More photos are on page 28.

Commissioner races drawing interest

By Noni Andersen

There will be two positions open for the Columbia County Board of Commissioners in the fall general election and there are eight candidates on the May 18 primary election ballot who hope to make the November final four.

Position 1:

Democratic incumbent Joe Corsiglia is being challenged by Gary Heide. Both candidates are residents of St. Helens.

Corsiglia formerly worked for PGE and served on the St. Helens City Council and planning commission prior to his election to the board of commissioners. He is completing his first term on the board.

Heide is a retired Lutheran clergyman and real estate salesperson. His primary public service has been with the Columbia Health District, formerly the St. Helens Hospital board.

A policy difference between the two candidates is Corsiglia's support for increased services from Legacy Health-

care, while Heide actively promotes a publicly supported hospital for Columbia County.

The two Republican candidates seeking Commission Position 1 are Colleen DeShazer of St. Helens and Glenn Dorschler of Scappoose.

DeShazer, who works in financial services, is serving her second term on the board of directors for the Port of St. Helens.

Dorschler has served on the Scappoose City Council since 1992 and has been mayor since 1996. Now on the nursing staff at St. Vincent Hospital, he previously served as a pastor and considers public service a "calling."

Position 3:

Republican incumbent Tony Hyde is the only one of the eight commission candidates who can plan to be on the November ballot – he's the only one who is unopposed.

Hyde, a former tree faller from Vernonia, is serving his second term on the board of commissioners. He served on

the Vernonia City Council for three years and was mayor for four years. Hyde has supported increased industry in the county and is taking the lead in developing a linear trail between Scappoose and Vernonia.

Three Democrats seek the opportunity to run against Hyde in November.

Rosemary Lohrke, of Scappoose, is a homemaker and tax preparer. She has served on the Scappoose CPAC and the Northwest Area Commission on Traffic.

Deer Island resident William Daemke is a small business owner with no prior governmental experience.

Real estate broker Steve Sickles, of St. Helens, also has a background in heavy industry. He serves on the St. Helens planning commission.

All three of these Democratic contenders cite unemployment as a major concern, though Sickles also emphasizes the need for a well-educated workforce.

47J looking at cuts in many programs

Beginning by tracing the loss of revenue over the last three years, Vernonia Schools Superintendent Mike Funderburg delivered a preliminary budget message April 15. Projections for the 2004-2005 general fund are more than \$1,000,000 less than the revenues received in 2001-2002. The overall reduction in revenue is also affected by annual contractual increases for employee compensation, commonly known as roll-up costs. Inflation, though moderate, also has an effect. The current year's budget will have to be reduced by \$327,182 even if all costs remained constant. Both certified and classified employee contracts are currently being negotiated.

This year's preliminary budget balancing uses a mixture of attrition, reduction in force, reduced programs, reduced rollup costs through contract compromise and general frugality. Reducing the budget by almost one-third of a million dollars will be painful and emotional.

"The decision before this committee and, ultimately, the board of directors is again unfair!" Funderburg said, "We should not have to choose between programs, staffing or structures. The next question will be: Do we reduce more from the budget or do we reduce days from the school year?"

Funderburg told the committee that cuts made in the budget should not be considered an indication of the relative importance of programs. "Everything we do in this district is important. We simply don't have the money to operate all programs," he said. He urged the committee to refer to the district's guiding principles and

particularly the budget goals established for the 2003 – 2005 biennium, that the district will (1) provide necessary instructional resources, including textbooks; (2) maintain safe and healthy physical facilities; and (3) offer staff the training necessary to enable teachers to lead students to higher levels of achievement.

Rick Gwin and Cari Levenseller were elected to serve as chairman and vice-chairman, respectively.

A balanced budget should be presented at the May 20 meeting. Budget meetings are open to the public.

Can you improve your business?

City streets are bustling on weekends and out-of-town visitors crowd the parking lot at Vernonia Lake, but are the cash registers ringing for local businesses? A community meeting, May 13 at 6:30 p.m. in the Scout Cabin, will address this question.

Local business owners are encouraged to attend this meeting led by Mary Bosch of Marketek, a Portland marketing company, and Vicki Dugger of the Oregon Downtown Development Association. The primary topic will be how local business owners are doing and what we, as a community, can do to help.

Bosch specializes in training businesses to increase their sales and maximize their strengths. Dugger's specialty is promoting business districts, as a whole, to increase a community's overall economic health. The meeting, sponsored by the Vernonia Marketing Committee, will be for and about Vernonia businesses.