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The INDEPENDENT

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"Voice of the Upper Nehalem River Valley"

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Fun in the sun...



Lazy summer days have started and it's play time for kids and dogs in Rock Creek.

GED class cancelled, may not resume

In prior years, residents of this area could take lower division Portland Community College courses in mathematics, English, writing and foreign lan-

guages, plus a handful of non-credit courses, without driving over the hills to the valley. The classes weren't all available at one time, just one or two classes per semester, but they provided a foundation that led many adults to pursue additional learning opportunities.

One of the most important classes – and the only class remaining this year in Vernonia – was adult basic education, the ABE/GED class that led to a high school equivalency for those who had not finished high school.

Even that class will not be offered next school year unless either PCC or the Vernonia School District changes their plans.

The GED class, which was taught by a PCC teacher in a Vernonia High School classroom, was abruptly halted in

May. The reasons for cancelling the class vary, depending on the source of the explanation. Both PCC and the Vernonia School District have expressed a desire to reinstate the class, but there has been little apparent effort to reach solutions to what are basically procedural problems.

The local equation is this: Local taxes go to both PCC and Vernonia schools and a local GED class is needed. The cost is not excessive and there is no public transportation to get to other PCC classes.

There will be a meeting in St. Helens on June 28 at 7:30 p.m. at the Columbia Center, 375 18th Street. PCC President Preston Pulliams wants to hear how PCC can better serve Columbia County. Those interested should take advantage of this opportunity to let him know.

Don Webb resigns from VRFPD board

The resignation of Don Webb at the June 8 meeting of the Vernonia Rural Fire Protection District has created a vacancy on the Board of Directors.

Those interested in serving on the board should attend the VRFPD board meeting on July 13 at 7:00 p.m.; applicants will be interviewed at that time. The term of Webb's position runs through June 30, 2005.

Board meetings are held at the fire station, 555 E. Bridge Street, Vernonia.

Critical questions, good survey for 47J

Vernonia School Board's June 10 meeting was well-attended, with audience questions, at both opportunities for comment, pointed and somewhat critical of actions taken or contemplated by the board.

Speaking as a member of the budget committee, Noni Andersen asked some questions pertaining to the budget.

Superintendent Mike Funderburg explained that what appeared to be a cut in the certified music position at the high school, resulted from the difference in the salary scale of the individual hired to fill that position last year, compared to the prior year. A second question, about an increase of almost \$25,000 in the office of the principal at the high school, Funderburg said, was due to closing Lincoln School and moving the administrative position from LGS to one with shared responsibilities at the high school and the grade school.

Andersen's last question pertained to board philosophy and, she said, an answer was not expected. At the last school

Urban Renewal Districts will be meeting topic

Many communities in Oregon have used Urban Renewal Districts (URD) to revitalize their downtown areas. Does it make sense to create an Urban Renewal District in Vernonia?

In an effort to learn more, the City of Vernonia has invited Jeanette Launer, an attorney specializing in Urban Renewal Districts, and Jeff Tashman, of Tashman, Johnson, LLC, a consulting firm, plus represen-

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board candidates fair in 1991, according to Andersen, all candidates, including three current board members, were asked whether they would cut athletics before academic subjects, if faced with the challenge of budget cuts. All three (Jim Krahn, Tim Titus, and Randy Hansen) responded affirmatively, she said. Comparing cuts in the recently approved budget, she said, 77.6 percent of funds remain in the extracurricular athletic budget, but only 22 percent remain for all other extracurricular activities. Noting that drama has been eliminated and music cut back, she questioned, "whether cuts should be that heavy in non-athletic activities when compared to athletics?"

Questions during the final audience comment time centered around how the school could build in a flood plain, the wisdom of closing LGS prior to the completion of a new building, and how furnishings would be paid for. Funderburg said that useful equipment, including some playground equipment, would be moved to WGS.

Amy Cieloha questioned why some sixth grade students would be in the basement when Funderburg said in a previous meeting that all students, including those transferring from LGS, would be in upstairs classrooms at WGS. Funderburg said that it is the decision of the building principal on how to utilize his building. Andersen asked the same question and said that the superintendent had previously said "everybody would be on the main floor." Funderburg explained that this would happen after completion of the new building. Murmurs

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