

The INDEPENDENT

Vol. 19, No. 16

"Voice of the Upper Nehalem River Valley"

August 19, 2004

Presenting the colors...



Members of the Oregon Army National Guard received cheers and encouragement as they proudly led the 2004 Vernonia Jamboree Parade.

Many questions on 47J project

It was standing room only at a public hearing before the Vernonia School Board, August 12, with patrons asking questions about plans for school buildings.

Board member Randy Hansen chaired the hearing in the absence of Jim Krahn. Cari Levenseller, Phil Doyle and Ed Buckner completed the necessary quorum. Tim Titus and Gienah Cheney did not attend the hearing.

Hansen opened the hearing with the "finding of fact" that would allow the district to use a design/build process to construct a new middle school, gymnasium and cafeteria building. Board members, having received the proposed findings on July 13, had few questions; members of the public had many.

With experience as a professional cook, Sally Harrison wondered if the kitchen area was adequate to meet the district's needs. Superintendent Mike Funderburg and Hansen said they visited several similar school kitchens and that the area allowed in the plan was larger than a newly remodeled

kitchen in Clatskanie. Harrison also questioned the esthetic qualities of a steel building and was assured that the building would be attractive, both inside and outside, with many windows facing the street and not "just a steel building."

Many questions concerned the future of existing buildings. Funderburg said that "no existing buildings would be torn down to construct the new facility" and that existing facilities are needed for kids. Two sixth grade classes, art instruction, special education and food service, will remain in the Washington Grade School (WGS) basement until the new building is ready for occupancy.

The district's initial estimate of occupancy was woefully inaccurate and, according to Funderburg, it will be from six months to a year before construction is complete. Asked about the closure of Lincoln Grade School, Hansen said that decision was made primarily for budget reasons, in order to achieve significant savings in utilities and transportation.

Several people asked about the district's future plans. Funderburg said, "no decisions have been made at this time, but the future [of district facilities] would be a board decision." A large body of evidence shows that all of the school buildings

in Vernonia are deteriorating and are seismically unsafe.

Hansen went on to say that that there were two basic choices: The first is to move to another location, which would be expensive because it would require buying property. Additionally, every committee that has looked at the issue has determined that keeping the schools in town is best.

The second choice is to start with something and expand. The board has discussed asking the public for a levy to finance future buildings. Decisions concerning the fate of WGS and high school buildings will develop as part of that discussion. Tom Jones said he would have liked the board to hold a public hearing before proceeding with building a middle school.

Jones also asked about the trees located between WGS and the high school. Funderburg said that the building process would determine which trees needed to be removed. He added that both the maintenance committee and the board have discussed the safety of trees in the playground. Because a child was killed by a falling tree limb at a school in California, Funderburg recommended the removal of three trees close to the play struc-

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Local businesses invited to dessert coffee and commercial code meeting

Oftentimes, business owners are frustrated, annoyed, or even angered by commercial building codes. If you have ever been in that situation, or think you may be in the future, the City of Vernonia is offering an evening of dessert, coffee and code information.

Thursday, September 16 at 7:00 p.m., business owners are invited to City Hall for a discus-

sion of occupancy permits and commercial code requirements. In addition to city officials, there will be a representative from Columbia County Land Development Services, which oversees commercial construction and remodeling for the City of Vernonia. Audience members will have the opportunity to ask questions, also.

Get ready for fun, games at Banks BBQ

Don't miss the fun at this year's Banks BBQ on Saturday, August 21 and Sunday, August 22. Activities begin at 9:00 a.m. Saturday when the hamburger stand opens at Sunset Park. Rides, games, food and craft booths will be open both days.

At 10:00 a.m. registration starts for the first Banks BBQ Cruiz-In followed by judging at noon and awards at 2:00 p.m.

Stock tractor registration and weigh-in will be from noon to 1:00 p.m., with the tractor pull starting at 2:00 p.m. Pickup registration for elimination begins at 3:00 p.m. for the pickup pull planned for 6 to 9:00 p.m.

The beer garden will be open from 6:00 p.m. to midnight.

A dance featuring the music of the Bare Soul Band will start at 8:00 p.m. and end at 11:00 p.m.

On Sunday, the Lions Club breakfast starts the day at 8:00 a.m. Parade sign-ups are at 9:00 a.m. for the parade that will start down Main St. at 11:00 a.m.

A community church service will start at 9:30 a.m. at H.S. Kelly Field.

Bingo will be held from 1 to 5:00 p.m. and a Kids' Pedal Pull will start at the track at 1:30 p.m. The Combine Demolition Derby will begin at 5:00 p.m.

For more information, call

Paul Ireland at 503-366-7116 or contact him via e-mail at <paulat7000rpm@aol.com>.

See pages 14-15 for more on Banks BBQ

Blood Drive set for August 23rd

There will be a Red Cross Blood Drive on Monday, August 23, from 1:30 to 6:30 p.m. at the Vernonia Community Church, 957 State Ave.

Positive identification is required to donate. To sign up, call Melissa at 503-528-5608. For more information, call Pastor Grant at 503-429-6790.