

The INDEPENDENT

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"Voice of the Upper Nehalem River Valley"

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Fun for Everyone!



Smiling faces were seen everywhere during the Vernonia Salmon Festival on October 2. These folks were enjoying one of two tractor-drawn hay rides that shuttled between salmon viewing sites and festival activities. For more photos, see pages 12 and 13.

Ordinances occupy Council

Vernonia City Council repealed an ordinance, September 20, that would have required R&R Motors to install sidewalks, because a survey of lot lines found that Highway 47 encroaches onto a portion of the R&R property. The city will work with ODOT and the property owner to acquire room for sidewalks.

Council discussed a flyer from Waste Management that sets new rates effective September 25. Discussion centered on a \$3.00 charge to recycle, if not paying for some other level of disposal. Recycle services are to be provided free of charge as part of the regular curbside garbage service. The City will continue working with Waste Management on trans-

fer station issues.

A list of surplus property was presented and unanimously approved as surplus so the items can be sold via E-bay.

Ordinance 631 on rules and regulations for the Vernonia Airport operation was amended to disband the Airport Commission and the position of Airport Manager. This will bring airport operations in line with operations of other parks and properties. A workshop is scheduled, October 20 at 7:00 p.m., for ordinance review for municipal airport park.

A timeline for filling the City Administrator position aims to make the final selection by the first of December. The job has been posted in several outlets.

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School board has many topics for consideration

The Vernonia School Board meeting on September 16 had a relatively large audience of concerned citizens, several of whom gave formal statements to the board or asked questions and made comments during the meeting.

Rosemary Curtis read a statement to the board chastising them for closing Lincoln Grade School prematurely. She told the board that it was "critical that we do something now" and suggested that LGS be reopened. She said that her son is in the "smallest, dreariest, most crowded classroom" she had ever visited. Curtis received applause from the audience for her closing comment that she was very upset about the facility and about bullying on the playground and was "close to pulling her kids out [of public school] to home school".

Krahn asked Curtis to discuss her concerns with WGS principal Nate Underwood. Underwood told the board that he

had not received any calls from concerned parents on these issues and encouraged parents to call him. Underwood also said he had significantly fewer discipline issues this year and, that while arranging recesses was a logistical problem, there were more adults available because all of the staff is in one school.

Natalie Rombach, this year's student representative to the board, said that a new method of increasing both class unity and school spirit is being tried this year. Classes will earn points for a range of activities throughout the year, with less focus on competition during Homecoming.

Safety issues

Superintendent Mike Funderburg told the board he had contacted a loss control specialist from Special Districts Association of Oregon (SDAO) to conduct a safety-related survey on August 17. He presented their recommendations and re-

ported on action taken to improve the safety of the facility. The recommendations were each assigned a priority for improvement related to the potential for serious injury or accident, from major priority (imminent danger or potential for serious injury or extensive property damage) to minor priority (low probability of injury or property damage).

Three items were designated as major priorities, two of which have been corrected. The play structure and funnel slide at Lincoln, initially rated as moderate priorities, were upgraded to major. The equipment has been either moved and correctly installed at Washington, or removed. The third high priority item concerned the trees in the playground. The board agreed, August 12, with a recommendation from the maintenance committee and Funderburg that the trees be removed. As of October 1, the trees remain.

Several risks identified as moderate priority pertained to construction of the concession stand and have been corrected. Others concerned shop equipment that has now been either repaired or disconnected. A lack of adequate housekeeping in the weight room was also rated as a moderate concern. Funderburg said that users were told the facility would be closed if teachers do not require that it be properly maintained.

Minor priorities included old canvas fire suppression hose cabinets, mat storage, fluorescent tube covers, and fencing between the playground and adjacent woods/roadway. According to Funderburg, all have been addressed except the fencing, due to lack of funds.

Middle School Project

Funderburg reported that plan concepts for the new school have been simplified, and asked the board to set priorities for what they want in the

building. Because of increased steel prices, Funderburg said, the size of the building has had to be reduced. The current proposal includes a cafeteria for about 250 students, but he recommends considering room for 350 or more students, to allow for growth. A larger cafeteria, smaller gym, and four classrooms would get all students out of the basement, he said.

Gordon Heironomous asked about multiple use cafeteria/gym rooms. Funderburg explained that the gym and cafeteria are used for different student groups at the same time and, though a multi-use room works in grades K-5, it does not work in grades 6-12. Board member Phil Doyle said that the board's first priority is to get students out of the WGS basement. After that need, the board agreed that the biggest kitchen/conference room possible would be the best use of available funds.

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