

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

Poor planning harms middle school project

Groundbreaking for the new Vernonia school building was held April 27 with the usual self-congratulatory language, but without mentioning that 2-3,000 cubic yards of fill material had been brought to the building site without a fill permit.

Without notification to the City of Vernonia, site preparation started April 26. After becoming aware of the work, the City informed them that they needed a fill permit. It was not until after the groundbreaking that a project representative showed up to get the forms.

At that point, City Administrator Robyn Bassett had a choice: She could order the work stopped until the permits were obtained, or she could help expedite the permit process. Bassett chose the latter.

Some may question Bassett's decision, but it would have been pointlessly expensive to stop work. The major question is: Why was the project started without the necessary permits?

If the planning personnel involved in this project were as professional as the school district has claimed, such questions wouldn't arise.

The Vernonia Rural Fire District has not signed off on the plan because the City's failure to require a No Parking zone creates dangerous congestion when students are being dropped off or picked up.

In addition to emergency equipment needing a clear roadway for quick response, Vernonia's emergency responders are mostly volunteers. When they are called, they must get to the fire hall in their personal vehicles, without sirens and emergency lights. Anyone who has crawled through the school zone during these times is aware of how slow it can be.

Funds for the new school are a concern, too. The school board authorized borrowing \$1 million for the project. Because it is a loan, it must be repaid with operating funds. Unlike a bond, there is no additional tax earmarked for loan repayment. The cost is now at least \$1.6 million and the district will have to borrow more. The first million has a graduated interest rate, ranging from 1.8 percent to 5.1 percent per year over 20 years. What will the next loan cost?

There is a lesson in all this. It's too bad it had to be learned this way.



Ike Says

By Dale Webb, member
Nehalem Valley Chapter, Izaak Walton League



So, when is a duck not part of the natural scene on a river? When it is plastic! And if you happened to have a duck numbered Y338, the state police want to talk to you! Not really, they are going to arrest George Tice for 178 counts of offensive littering instead. Kidding, again.

During this year's River Fest there was a great duck escape during the ducky derby. It seems that with the river being up and ODF&W unwilling to allow a net to be strung across the river, a lot of ducks continued down Rock Creek and beyond. I found this out the next day while on the river. Pink, blue and yellow ducks were everywhere. I decided that I could help with this problem and a few days later returned in my kayak with the proper gear to get me some ducks. So what did I find? Well, 178 ducks that I could retrieve, but there are still a few escapees out there that I couldn't get to. It was interesting to see all the different ducks and their decorations. Y338 was one of my favorites, it had antlers. Y210 had green foil ears and a rooster's comb, B200 was all dressed up in flowers, Y357 had an interesting plastic tape suit and poor F227 had been partially eaten by a critter on the shore. I guess it didn't taste like a real duck. I saw some real ducks hanging out around P839;

I think a Merganser hen thought it was one of her chicks, kind of odd though, considering the ducky was pink with black spots. So whose duck was the best swimmer? That would be P782, which was found at the tail end of Ellis's Dairy farm on the Nehalem River.

It was good to see the turn-out of water craft during River Fest; I could join the fun for only a mile before retiring to my home for rest, since I had to pull a night shift. This brings me to my next subject.

Many of you may have seen the Attorney General's opinion on the public's right to use the waterways in the state of Oregon. It was a good opinion if you are a user, probably not so good if you're a landowner. I would think, as a landowner, whether you are or are not disturbed by this opinion would depend on why you own the land in the first place. Some have been glad to share and some have not. Most of you know that I kayak a lot of the local streams. I have never had a bad experience with a landowner during any of my trips, and I thank you for that. Do I have a right to use the rivers as I have? Under the A.G.'s opinion, yes.

But there is a movement in the legislature to bring the public's right to use the waterways of the state to a statutory conclusion. While this is good, some of the bills are not. Currently, there are three proposed bills in the Senate, 423, 1014 and 1028. SB423 is sponsored by the Northwest Steelheaders Association and mirrors the Montana access statutes, which basically is what the

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