

Property owners must maintain public right-of-way

The City of Vernonia wants local citizens to know they deserve congratulations. Since the start of fire season, the City has issued over a dozen violation notices for fire hazards and the cooperation from citizens has been overwhelming.

There has been some confusion, however, about responsibility for maintaining public right-of-ways. Public right-of-way includes streets, roads (including unimproved), paths,

trails and drainage ditches. Vernonia Ordinance 718 states that the city is not obligated to maintain or repair any part of the public right-of-way. As in most municipalities, this obligation falls to the adjacent property owners.

This means that each property owner has responsibility for cutting weeds in the easement adjacent to their property. This also applies to undeveloped streets or drainage

ditches.

In addition, it is not lawful to obstruct, occupy or encroach on a public right-of-way without the permission of the City. The City does grant permission to use these by issuing franchises, licenses and permits.

Once again, a big thank you to the citizens of Vernonia. The efforts that make Vernonia a beautiful place to live are appreciated by all citizens and visitors.

Use caution with personal watercraft

A recent series of personal watercraft (PWC) accidents is highlighting the need for caution. A number of serious injuries and one fatality have occurred, prompting the warning from the Oregon State Marine Board (OSMB) and marine patrol officers.

"We are greatly concerned about the number of PWC accidents in recent weeks. Operating too fast and too close to other boats has played a role in most of these accidents," said Paul Donheffner, director of the OSMB. "Operating and riding a PWC can be fun, but if you don't take basic precautions, it can quickly turn into a tragedy." PWC operators can avoid accidents by following some basic rules:

- Do not operate in excess of 10 mph when approaching within 100 feet of another motorized or sail vessel underway.
- All persons must wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved type I, II or III life jacket.

• If you are 45 years old or younger, you must have an Oregon boater education card to operate motorized watercraft.

• Know your limitations.

PWC operators were issued 651 citations in 2004. The majority of these citations were for failure to carry a boater education card, exceeding the speed limit and unsafe or reckless operation. Unsafe and reckless operations are operations that endanger or would likely endanger a person or property, such as operating a PWC too close to a canoe causing it to nearly capsize; and operating a boat carelessly in willful disregard of others, such as a PWC pulling a skier through an area where swimmers are present in spite of regulatory markers.

Injuries commonly occur when a PWC collides either with another PWC, a boat or with fixed objects such as docks or tree stumps. Risk factors include inexperience, excessive speed and careless maneuvers by the operators. Operators unfamiliar with the watercraft seem to be at especially high risk. In most accidents involving a PWC the operator has fewer than 10 hours of experience. Operators who lend their PWC to family and friends must be sure the user knows how to properly operate the craft. Owners can be held responsible for how the people

they lend their PWC to operate, according to the OSMB.

Current models can reach speeds in excess of 65 mph and, as with any other watercraft, stopping a PWC is done only by cutting the throttle and coasting. "While coasting, no steering is possible on many PWC models," said Bill Rydholm, law enforcement manager for OSMB. "Marine officers are being asked to increase vigilance regarding enforcement of PWCs operating at high speeds and in close proximity to other boats.

People can safeguard themselves by taking a safety course designed for PWC operation or taking a boating safety course. These courses will increase the operator's understanding of the rules of the waterway as well as safety issues that PWC operators encounter. For more information, visit the OSMB web site at <www.boatoregon.com>.

Bits & Bites

By Jacqueline Ramsay



Were you blessed by a visit from the "Kirby" man this past week? "Hello – I'm not selling anything, I've a new product for you to try" (a bottle of orange something or other) – no cost, but unless you listen to his spiel and let him in to demonstrate his Kirby you can't keep it. Ha – they haven't changed their bla bla in the last 50 years. I finally said in plain English, "I do not want you in my house," he didn't seem to understand the words "not interested."

Due to circumstances, I didn't make the last council meeting but I got papers that filled me in and I've a few things eating at me.

The Lake – things will change now that Big Bill isn't there. The friendly wave and chit chat and other information people ask about the town and lake. That's gone. So is the homey look of his home spot. you know something is gone. Yes, we need a tree grove there, a flag pole and more dock space but that human "Howdy" is also very important.

The Library – Vernonia, the lost in the woods town would not gain, but lose much if it joined any other towns to, so

they say, improve service to us. I saw it tried years ago elsewhere and when you are "out of the loop" you don't gain. The folks here have wanted and worked for a, what I think is a, very well-rounded and public serving library and in most areas won't gain a thing. Stick to your ground.

The Learning Center/Senior Center – I may be old but I have a functioning brain (maybe I can't spell but that's O.K. too.)

The seniors were in need of a new home long before the Learning Center was a thought. Schools after hours held adult learning classes for folks wanting to advance their skills and education and to help students ahead – where did they go? They had teachers, machines and books available for a fee and the buildings were already there.

In reading those minutes – maybe not for the public – I find in them where the seniors of Vernonia stand in the line of need. You just lost me.

The bike on the sidewalk question – Stop being nice, stop the party, give them a cash due ticket, make them pay money, not a slap on the fingertip nor community service (that has proven it does not work). Maybe if mom and dad have to pay they will sit down on the law at home.

Enjoy the summer, winter's on its way.

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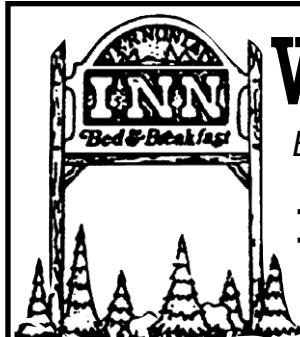


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