

# The INDEPENDENT

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## Opinion

### Will there be any nature left in Vernonia's future?

The City of Vernonia, its Marketing Committee and the Vernonia Chamber of Commerce have all used the natural beauty of this area in promotional materials. Photos have emphasized our flora and fauna.

Residents who regularly utilize the trails, especially around Vernonia Lake, are continually entertained – and sometimes awed – by ducks, grebes, coots, geese, heron, redwinged blackbirds, wrens, kingfishers, osprey, eagles, otters, rabbits, deer and rarer wildlife.

Unlike crows, starlings and rodents, most of these animals do not coexist well with human developments. Indeed the state bird, the Western Meadowlark, is in trouble throughout much of Oregon and its sprightly song is rarely heard today in the Willamette Valley.

Vernonia's headlong rush into glitz at Vernonia Lake will have the same result: Crows, starlings and rodents will predominate along with nearly tame ducks that are used to being fed by humans. That will pretty much eliminate the fauna and, once we start "landscaping" our natural areas, we will also eliminate the flora.

If the City's vision of the future is amusement park activities, glitz and noise, they are well on their way. Trees are replaced with flag poles and glaring lights.

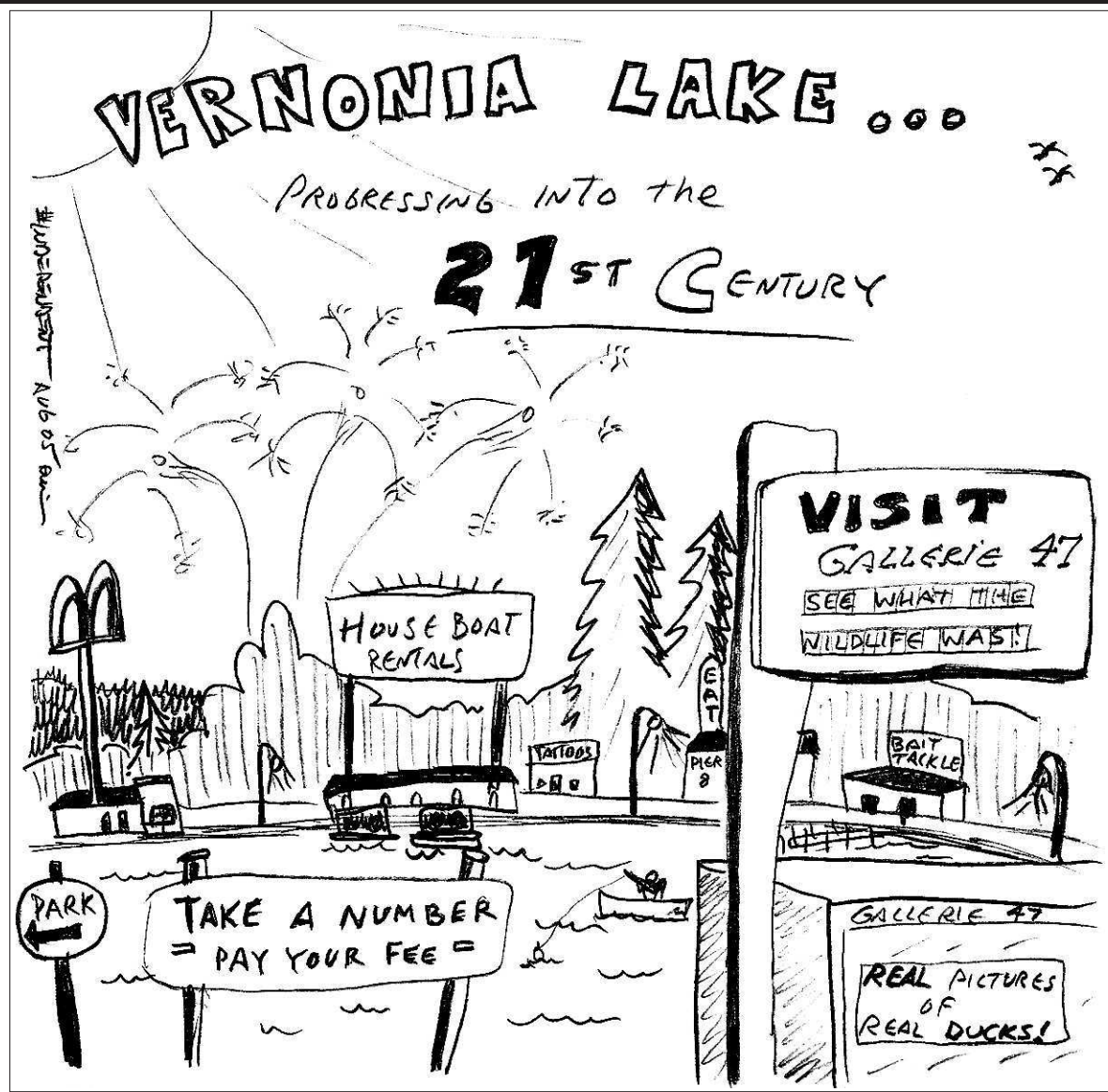
There are lots of other possibilities, too: When the song birds are gone, they can pipe in recorded "live bird songs" through a public address system. How about erecting plaques at historical sites where wood ducks used to hatch? What about grand displays of full color photos of the wildlife that used to live here?

Statues work, too. The City can buy plaster deer and rabbits and place them in artfully landscaped areas where those messy ferns, maples and alders used to be. It will be much tidier.

Sarcasm aside, the City of Vernonia is on its way to destroying the natural beauty of our parks. Development and order are needed in our business district, not in our parks.

We should not destroy the beauty of leather-like maple leaves against moss-covered trunks, or lichen that looks like flowers on winter-bare tree limbs. We cannot improve on the delightful contrast of feathery needles contrasting with rough bark.

Destroying nature's gifts is not improvement.



### District clerk's effort finds pot of gold

By Schann Nelson

Imagine borrowing money and legally paying back only 84 percent of the amount, while earning interest on the loan.

Too good to be true? Not this time.

When Vernonia School District Clerk Dawn Plews found the Qualified Zone Academy Bond (QZAB) fund, which allows school districts to borrow money for certain types of projects without paying interest, the district applied, successfully, for a loan.

At the August 11 Vernonia School Board meeting, Joe McLiney, of McLiney and Company, told the board that the turn-around time on the QZAB loan \$487,660 that the district will be receiving was phenomenal. He said that districts generally have to get in line and wait for approval or renewal of funding. The fund is limited and renews every two years, if approved by Congress.

QZAB bonds are purchased by banks which provide the initial money in exchange for a tax credit. Though the credit does not make purchasing the

bonds profitable for banks, McLiney and Company developed a structure that ensures a profit over the course of the loan, while providing an opportunity for schools. The bank enjoys a 1/16 reduction in their liability every year, but can claim a tax credit for the entire amount of the loan for the full 16-year payoff period.

The first payment is due one year after the close of the loan and annually thereafter, but the school does not pay back the

entire loan amount. The district will pay \$25,565 per year to a holding account controlled by a trustee, and the bank will pay interest on the money in the holding account. At the end of the loan, the district will have paid only \$409,032 of the amount borrowed while receiving almost \$79,000 in interest. Combined, the payments and interest in the holding account will equal the interest free amount borrowed by the district.

### New handbooks for students, staff

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The board approved student handbooks with the addition, suggested by Wallace, of definitive procedures for showing feature films and movies in the classroom. Films must have an educational purpose, and 'R' rated movies, such as *Schindler's List*, are allowable at the high school with parental permission.

High School Principal Curt Scholl gave the board draft copies of a Coaches and Advisors Handbook for review. Though based on a previous

document, a handbook specifying the duties and responsibilities of coaches and advisors has not been used in the district for many years, according to Scholl.

### Committee Assignments

Board Chairman Randy Hansen announced this year's committee assignments and Superintendent Funderburg told board members that they can begin holding meetings. He particularly encouraged the long-range planning committee to begin organizing as soon as

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