

Citizens ask Vernonia City Council to reconsider selling airport

Two public hearings started off the April 17 Vernonia City Council meeting. One hearing was on annexation of 1313 and 1386 Cherry St. No testimony in favor, in opposition or neutral was given and the annexation was unanimously approved by council. The second hearing was to declare a property at 872 Weed Ave. as surplus. This property was foreclosed by the County and then donated to Vernonia. The city looked at the property as a possible parking lot location but found the topography prohibitive. They will auction the property so a home can be placed there (the existing home is in an advanced state of disrepair). No public comment was received so the hearing was closed and the property will continue to be handled as surplus.

Three audience members,

Mike Seager, Tracey Fletcher, and Dan Brown spoke from the floor to ask council to move slowly and consider more options for the airport property, instead of just declaring it surplus.

Helen Johnston spoke about problems having to do with construction of houses on Louisiana. Johnston mentioned mud, construction debris, water damned by fallen logs, and busted culverts. She urged council to relook at the nuisance ordinance and how it is managed. Janelle Cedargreen spoke in favor of seeing "some teeth" in the nuisance ordinance.

The K-9 officer, Krueger, was discussed. He is currently not on duty while an issue with the City's insurance carrier is worked out. Mayor Sally Harrison said, "It is priority no. 1 to

get the dog back on the force."

Councilor Steve Whiteman told City Administrator Robyn Bassett he expects follow-up from her on issues brought up at council meetings that she says the city will investigate. Whiteman made it clear that he wants to hear, either via an item on the next agenda, or by email, the outcome of such items so he's prepared when the public asks him questions about topics raised at meetings.

Councilor Randy Parrow asked why there are late fees on the Accounts Payable. He said his understanding was that the bills were on the agenda twice a month in order to avoid late fees. Bassett asked him to contact Finance Clerk Cindy Naillon to find out, Parrow asked instead that Bassett find out from Naillon and let him

know.

The council approved volunteers being added to the city's workers' compensation insurance. They also approved an update to the Comprehensive Plan, to include the Transportation System Plan, a house-keeping issue.

A liquor license renewal for the New Hong Kong was approved. City staff was directed to draft a letter of support for the Sheriff's levy request.

Council tabled a request from Columbia County to increase the amount of money they send for transit services. Council decided they would like more information about the cost versus the amount of services Vernonia receives.

A workshop was set for 7:00 p.m. on May 15, to discuss the Airport property disposition.

Chief of Police Mat Workman reported that the police department has received a grant to do more enforcement of bicycles on sidewalks downtown and will be starting a pedestrian enforcement operation at crosswalks and in the school zones soon. Workman told council that there will be a Bike Rodeo on April 29 from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. starting at Vernonia Middle School. There will also be another police training in Vernonia on April 22, when officers from around Oregon will receive school shooter training at Lincoln Grade School.

Master Gardener Spring Fair April 22

The 10th annual Spring Garden Fair, sponsored by the Columbia County Master Gardener™ Association will be held Saturday, April 22, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. in the Commons of St. Helens High School, 2375 Gable Road in St. Helens. Admission and parking are free.

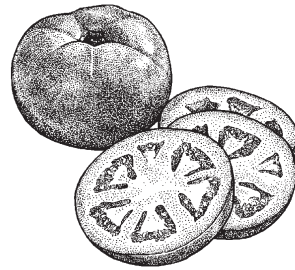
Master Gardeners will be selling locally-grown tomatoes for only \$1 each. There will be 60 varieties available. During last year's Spring Fair, 3,566 tomato plants were sold.

The plant clinic table will be stocked with information on

may garden subjects and will have certified Master Gardener™ volunteers to answer gardening questions. On display will be the chapter's insect collection, a cold frame, a mason bee house and a compost maker.

New this year is free 10-minute nitrate testing of well water by OSU. As in year past, nearly 30 local vendors will be offering garden-related items for sale.

Dozens of raffle prizes will be given away throughout the day. Raffle tickets are on sale now for only \$1 each from



many Columbia County Master Gardeners and the OSU Extension Service in St. Helens. Tickets will also be available at the fair.

For more information, contact the Columbia County Extension Service at 503-397-3462 or visit their website at www.mstrgardener.org.

Oregon Trail Rally returns to Vernonia

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start on the Camp 5 stage which goes off Hwy 26 on Salmonberry Road. The spectator area for this stage has a view of a straight-on approach, going into a tight right turn. From 2:10 to 4:40 p.m., the cars will be on the McGregor Road stage which offers a good spectator view from a hillside of a right turn, fast approach.

What is Rally racing? The sport of Rally racing takes place on every continent around the world, attracting more fans than Formula 1, Indy Car or NASCAR. Rally is one of the world's most challenging extreme motorsports. Unlike circuit racing, a Rally takes

place on gravel roads, and the course is unknown to competitors until they face the roads at speed.

The cars race against the clock on closed roads, and the team with the lowest total elapsed time at the end of the event is the winner in each class. Racing takes place only on "special stages," using demanding back roads closed by local authorities for the event. "Transits" connect the "special stage" sections together and are driven at normal highway speeds, with teams fully subject to all traffic laws.

Each vehicle carries a driver and a co-driver/navigator. Using a detailed route book or

stage notes and a sophisticated rally computer, the co-driver keeps the team on-course and advises the driver of any hazards ahead. This role is as critical as the driver's skill, since the team is traveling at full racing speeds over roads they have never before seen, in any type of weather.

More information is available in the Oregon Trail Rally Spectator Guide, available on the news stand at *The Independent*, 725 Bridge St., Vernonia.

See Legal Notice on page 22 for road closure information in connection with the Oregon Trail Rally.



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