

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

Can River Fest survive?

2005 River Fest was drippy with rain, but still well attended. There were 44 watercraft launched down the Nehalem, 700 ducks in the rubber ducky race, a chili cook-off contest, a home brew contest, a car bash and other activities available.

This year, the rain was absent but so were the crowds and the activities. Only 15 watercraft left the launch site, only 484 ducks floated down Rock Creek. There were no contests and, as can be seen in the picture on page one, not many people were out enjoying the festival.

Does this mean River Fest is dead? Maybe. Remember that River Fest, Jamboree, and Salmon Festival are all put together and pulled off by volunteers. The volunteers for River Fest undoubtedly worked hard and did their best to deliver a quality event for the community. Also, all three Vernonia festivals donate proceeds to area charities. No River Fest in the future would mean no proceeds for those non-profits.

This might be a good opportunity to bring in an outside event coordinator to see if professional help can enhance River Fest with new ideas, new fundraising opportunities, and to keep the event on the calendar. An event coordinator has the expertise and a vested interest (they want to make money, too) in making sure that any event they work on has interesting activities, good sponsorship, ample advertising, and that it will raise money for the non-profits in town.

Vernonia Festival Committee Chairperson Randy Parrow has indicated a willingness to sit down with an event coordinator and hear what such a venture might have to offer River Fest and Vernonia. Stay tuned.

Community misses out

On May 5, from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m., the three Vernonia superintendent candidates were all available to the public. During this two hour period, admittedly held during a time when some are not yet home from work, only one community member took the opportunity to meet and talk to these people. Many profess to care what happens to our school district, though all but one missed this chance to discuss their ideas with the highest school official in Vernonia. Too bad.



A brief primer on public agency budgeting

It is budget time for local and county government agencies, so here is *The INDEPENDENT's* annual explanation of basic budget procedures.

All city, county, school and fire district budgets, and all agencies with budgets that must be reported to the state, follow the same basic format. Revenues and expenses are accounted for in a variety of funds, each of which has a defined purpose. The purpose may be to keep track of funds allocated for specific projects, such as building a reserve for replacement of buildings or other infrastructure, or to track the revenues and expenses of a department. Usually, a General Fund serves as the main depository of revenue and is the 'checkbook' for expenses.

At an agency's first budget meeting, a budget message is delivered and, usually, the budget document is presented to the budget committee for review. The budget document is divided into separate sections for each fund. The budget message is presented by a budget officer appointed by each agency's governing board. The budget officer may be the administrative head, a finance clerk, or anyone else deemed to be the appropriate presenter.

Each section, or fund, of the budget document shows anticipated revenues and proposed expenses for each account within the fund. The proposed amount is followed by a blank column that will be filled by the budget committee's recommended budget. These committees are usually fairly large and most operate under Robert's Rules of order to make agreed upon changes in the budget.

The recommended budget then goes before the governing body, ie., the board of directors, council, etc., for final decisions. The final column in a budget document is for the adopted budget, as voted on by the governing body. Also included in the budget document are audited figures showing actual revenues and expenditures for the prior two fiscal years (In this case for fiscal years 2003-2004 and 2004-2005), as well as the adopted budget for the current fiscal year (2005-2006).

Resources (income) are presented first in each budget account and include the anticipated amount of each revenue source that goes into a specific fund, such as taxes, fees, grants, etc. Expenditures for each fund are also itemized, depending on the anticipated uses, such as personnel, travel, materials and services, capital outlay or contingency. A special category included in the expenditure portion, the "unappropriated ending balance" is intended to provide enough cash carryover to last until resources start coming in for the new budget year. State law requires balanced budgets, therefore, total anticipated resources must equal total planned expenditures.

Because budget documents are large, they are condensed for publication. Only the totals for each major category (personal services, debt service, capital outlay, etc.) are printed in your local newspaper. This makes the document hard to understand, particularly when several funds are combined into one aggregate budget. All budget committee meetings are open to citizens.