

Letters

Spaghetti dinner will help fund fireworks

To the Editor:

The Buckhorn Restaurant is again providing a spaghetti dinner as a fundraiser for Vernonia's 4th of July fireworks.

The dinner will be Thursday, June 22, from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m., and will include salad, bread, spaghetti and dessert. Prices are \$8.00 for adults and \$4.00 for children under twelve.

Letters have been sent to businesses and some individuals asking for donations for the fireworks, and cans have been placed in some of the businesses. We will also be collecting [donations] after the fireworks and your generosity will be greatly appreciated, as always.

The fireworks cost approximately \$3,000.00, so it takes all of you contributing to reach this goal.

**De Loris Webb
Vernonia Pride**

Once asset is gone, it can't be replaced

To the Editor:

Although I live in Idaho now, I lived in western Oregon for the better part of my life. Oregon is a great state, where the citizens make sensible decisions more often than the norm. In the case of your Vernonia Airport that is in jeopardy, I am afraid the city may make a

mistake that they will live to regret.

A rural airport is an asset that, once gone, will never come back. I am the manager of a small airport in Lava Hot Springs, Idaho. Like your town, not everyone sees the benefit of the airport. In my town, I am fully aware that benefits including tourist trade, air ambulance access, fire-fighters' landing site, emergency landing site, and "town color" are overlooked by most town residents.

A recent vote showed that less than 40 percent of the town's residents have any interest in the airport. In our town, less than 25 percent of the people use the city parks, and less than 5 percent use the tennis courts. Nearly every facility in town is used by less than a majority of the residents. The airport is no different. Clearly, it does not make sense to say that a majority of residents need to utilize a city facility in order to justify the facility's public ownership or existence.

Think about the future. In this day and age, the city would never be able to replace the airport once it is gone. Especially those of you who have no strong feelings one way or the other, do you really want to enable the airport to be taken away from future generations, just for the enrichment of special interests today? Please make the effort to understand the issues, voice your con-

cerns, and do what needs to be done to protect the city's asset.

Sincerely,

**Reed White, Manager
Lava Hot Springs Airport
Idaho**

Airport is important in emergency events

To the Editor:

To the people of Vernonia: As a member of the local airport commission, as a pilot, and as a recent passenger on Air Life, our airport is an important asset to Baker City and Baker County. We have one business, perhaps two, who are significant contributors to the economic base of the community and who would not be here if it were not for the airport. The airport gives us quick access to medical services not available in our community. Even though it is a city owned airport, the county has twice now voted to support bond issues to maintain and improve the airport.

I would urge the city of Vernonia to reconsider declaring your airport surplus and to keep it as a city asset and work to improve it. Even though currently a grass strip, it is the single best economic attractor the city has. In any survey of the items that a business looks for when locating to a community, the availability of an airport usually is at the top of the list.

I understand that at one time the Vernonia airport was paying

its way and had a good airport manager who was working on improving the airport and then something happened. I would hope that Vernonia would form an airport advisory commission (including pilots) whose goal is to develop proposals for the development and promotion of the Vernonia Airport. It is much easier to keep a city asset like the airport than to get it back if you lose it.

Sincerely,

**Jon Croghan
Baker City**

Airport will be lost because of neglect

To the Editor:

Open Letter to the Vernonia City Council.

As someone who's been involved in aviation and airport issues for a long time, I was concerned when I heard about the proposed sale of Vernonia's airport to a private developer. So I decided to come out to the city council's airport workshop meeting and see what the fuss was all about. It didn't take me long to recognize a sadly familiar pattern: the city neglects the airport until it is no longer viable, then claims they can't support it and puts it up for sale.

Based on her statements at the meeting, the mayor seems to have made up her mind that the only way the airport can remain viable is if it is sold to someone who can develop it. I must respectfully disagree with that assessment.

Please don't misunderstand me - I know little about the proposed developer's plans or resources, and would very much like to think he could make a go of it. If I believed it was the only way to keep it open, I'd be the first to support the plan. But I've been around aviation long enough to know that privatizing a public airport is all too often the first step in its eventual demise. Short of an outright reversion clause which is very unlikely to get past any bank loan officer, all the promises and restrictions in the world won't keep an airport from being converted to some other use if the developer can't get insurance, falls on hard times, declares bankruptcy, or sells to some other entity with no interest in maintaining

the land as an airport.

Public entities nearly always have better access to the types of resources that are necessary to properly manage airports than do private ones, and contrary to what the mayor would have us believe, there's no reason the city can't make their airport viable. For proof one only needs to look back a few years, when the city had a competent airport manager who had a clear stake in the long term viability of the airport. The airport was self-sustaining (generating a surplus in fact), had tie-downs and a nice little camping area popular with flyers, was receiving airport improvement grant funds from the state (is still eligible for them in fact, contrary to the mayor's assertion at the meeting), and had plans for new hangars on airport land under a long term lease arrangement.

Somewhere along the line that plan went off track, and it's a real shame that it did. Because in all likelihood you wouldn't be talking about selling it today if those plans had been allowed to proceed. Improvement breeds improvement, and the measures proposed at that time - building modern hangars and paving the runway - would very likely have spurred more growth of the kind that the city is now talking about selling the airport to achieve. When a city supports their airport and takes steps to improve it, aviation businesses are that much more likely to come in and lease airport land adding jobs to the community and lease payments to the city.

One needs only to look a few miles west to see an example of what I'm talking about. A few years ago the situation was much the same at Seaside: the municipal airport was falling into disrepair, the city was tired of spending money to keep it up, and there was talk of closing it and making it into an industrial park. But the Seaside city council took a different approach. They formed a new airport advisory committee, being careful to appoint knowledgeable and resourceful people from the aviation and local business communities. The committee's task was simple: help the city make the airport

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Between the Bookends

By Denise Holmes, Librarian

Banks Public Library

Summer Fun at the Banks Library is ready to take kids on adventures in learning with Paws, Claws, Scales and Tales! Come in and sign up for special programs and the Summer Reading Program.

Preschool & Grades K-6

Thursdays at 2:00 p.m.

June 22: BJ the Clown

June 29: Juggle Mania

July 13: Reptile Man

July 20: Furfest - For kids entering 4th & 5th grades. Space for this program is limited, so registration is required.

July 27: When Animals Were People

Aug. 3: Pink Pig Puppet Theatre

Preschool through High School Reading Program

June 1-August 31, 2006

June 1: Sign-up begins

July 15: Last day of sign-up

Aug 1: Turn in completed reading record and receive award book

Aug 31: Last day to turn in reading record

Developing an appreciation for reading at a young age provides positive and creative outlets for a child's energy and imagination, as well as a strong foundation for their future. According to reading experts, kids who do not read over the summer lose about one-third of a grade level by the beginning of the next school year. Let your public library help your children maintain their academic skills while enjoying creative learning.

Banks Public Library: 111 Market Street.

Hours: Tues., Wed., Thurs., 12 - 7:00 p.m.;
Fri. and Sat. 12 - 5:00 p.m.

Preschool Story Time:

Wednesdays at 10:15 a.m.

Phone: (503) 324-1382 for information
(503) 846-3245 to renew material

Internet: <www.WILnet.wcccls.lib.or.us>

Browse library resources, reserve or renew materials online. *Call for information.*