

The INDEPENDENT

Vol. 21, No. 22

"Voice of the Upper Nehalem River Valley"

October 19, 2006

One big salmon



"Claudia" salmon, a popular attraction at the Vernonia Salmon Festival, has murals inside on the walls to help educate children about salmon. Children could climb inside, but it sure looks like this youngster is about to be eaten by a salmon instead of vice versa. See page 32 for more photos. Young pumpkin carvers sought, see page 7.

Full slate on ballot for Commissioner

Three candidates are vying for one open position on the Columbia County Board of Commissioners. All of the candidates support the operating levy for the Sheriff's department.

Rita Bernhard
(Photo on page 4)

Democrat incumbent Rita

Bernhard, 62, of Scappoose, has served two terms on the Board of Commissioners (BoC). Prior to that, she worked in a law office, was secretary to the BoC, and assisted in the County Counsel's office.

She graduated from Lawn-dale (Calif.) High School, became a licensed cosmetologist and took classes at El Camino

Community College, before moving to the northwest. While her family was growing up, she was a volunteer for many youth activities and has taken classes at Portland Community College. She and her husband, Norm, have been married for

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Watch for Hwy. 202 traffic control

Work is underway on a project to replace the Lyons Creek Bridge and the Ford Creek Bridge on Oregon 202, about 15 miles north of Vernonia.

A single work zone has been created between mileposts 45.17 and 45.93 on Oregon 202. Traffic has been reduced to one lane for the duration of

the project. Work will take place weekdays, and traffic generally will be controlled by flaggers during work hours.

A traffic signal system has been installed to control traffic in the work zone when flaggers are not present. The signal system will allow traffic to alternately use the single travel lane.

Total of \$300,000 used to improve housing in area

The October 16 Vernonia City Council meeting started with a public hearing on Community Housing Grant Wrap-up with Beverly Danner and Cindy Peake of Community Action Team. Peake told council that the program, which loaned money to homeowners, or provided grant monies, for improvements and remodeling, served 11 homeowners in Vernonia and 12 outside the city. The total amount loaned was \$300,000, with the average loan being \$14,300. With other funds used, such as weatherization grants, the total amount spent was \$544,135.96, and 68 people benefited from the repairs or remodels. Danner told council that this program (through CDBG) is closing, but another county program will be starting up to provide similar services.

Cindy Ball told council that one of the 'test holes,' right beside the highway, on Riverside Drive, needs to be filled or it will become a problem when we get ice. City administrator Dick Kline responded that he had forwarded Ball's email to Jeff Burch in Public Works and he believes that hole will be filled in with gravel. The holes can not be paved over at this point in the wastewater project.

Council, again, discussed how to handle transfer of title on unwanted cemetery plots. After some discussion of historical handling versus handling according to ordinance, councilor Brett Costley made a motion to allow an owner of two lots to sell them. The motion died for lack of a second.

State law does not allow the purchasing and selling of cemetery lots for profit. By ordinance the city may buy back unwanted lots for the amount of

purchase, less 15 percent for transfer fees. If the city opts not to re-purchase the lots, council can allow the owner to sell the lots.

Without a motion to vote on, Mayor Sally Harrison declared that the decision made at the last council meeting will stand; that the city will purchase the lots back at the purchase price, but will waive the transfer fees.

Kline then told council that he wanted to clarify that the cemetery is not a 'perpetual care' cemetery, there are no funds available for the cemetery, and that the caretaker has held bake sales and other fundraisers for the cemetery, but he wanted to make it clear that the city does not make money on the cemetery.

WATER RESTRICTIONS ARE STILL IN EFFECT

Vernonia's Level II water restrictions will continue until there is enough rain to increase the water levels in Rock Creek.

With consensus from the council, Mayor Harrison made a proclamation about a city platform for strengthening families. Harrison said the city is already doing many things covered by the proclamation, including Vernonia Night Out and the police training for babysitters, the library programs for kids and families, the Drug-Free Community Coalition, Vernonia School District 47J superintendent Ken Cox efforts to rebuild relationships in the community, future Vernonia Community Learning Center (VCLC) classes for tots, teens and families, the Senior Center services, Fire and Rescue activities and the many churches

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CANDIDATES FORUM

Vernonia City Hall
October 20, 2006
7:30 p.m.

Meet the candidates for mayor and city council. The audience will be able to ask questions of the candidates.