

Letters

Letter Carriers food drive invaluable help

To the Editor:

On behalf of Columbia Pacific Food Bank, I would like to thank the letter carriers throughout our community for the wonderful work that they did this year on the Annual Letter Carriers Food Drive. On Saturday, May 12th, our neighbors throughout the area set food out for their letter carriers to pick up. The generosity of the community and the commitment of our letter carriers brought 6,340 lbs. into the St. Helens Post Office, an increase of 1,000 lbs., 350 lbs. into Scappoose, 17 lbs. into Clatskanie, 3,179 lbs. into Rainier and 1,003 lbs. into Vernonia for a grand total of 10,889 lbs. of much needed food.

I would also like to thank our very valuable volunteers who met the letter carriers at the post office to help load it into our truck.

An event like this is what allows Columbia Pacific Food Bank and our emergency food pantries to provide healthy and nutritious food boxes to those in need. We couldn't do it without you.

Great Job!

Tracie Smith
Executive Director

Sen. Johnson article not "breaking news"

To the Editor:

The Oregonian has been promoting a story about Senator Betsy Johnson recently. In my opinion the story is irresponsible and not worthy of their responsibility, public trust and stature in our state.

They are running the story like it's "breaking news," which it is not, and even acknowledge they have gone to print without salient, basic facts that provide a big part of the story. Thinking this might be a story because someone brought it to their attention is fine. Not bothering to A) do their research, B) await facts and information directly relevant to the story and C) question the motivation, context and relationship of their "sources" to the story – is the worst kind of newspaper busywork – not worthy of being called journalism.

The credibility of sources is something that should be important to journalists. Carefully and responsibly developing the story should be important to journalists. Trying to "FOXify" a potential story and try to get a headline by refusing to wait for a story is the worst kind of sell-out.

This issue will get resolved because there are forums and public processes to do that – and the facts exist. That *The Oregonian* and Harry Esteve, for whom we once had respect, would do this half-baked is a soiling of their credibility that won't go away.

Betsy, John and the good work they do will far outlast anyone at the Oregonian.

Sally J. Jones
Rainier

Mayor objects to opinion of columnist

To the Editor:

Noni Andersen of *The Independent*. I feel I owe it to the citizens of Vernonia to respond to our recent "Out of My Mind" commentary in *The Independent* (May 17, 2007).

Of course you are entitled to your opinion of the sitting city council. It would make your opinion more meaningful if you had used facts instead of conjecture to form your said opinion.

Example: The Tree Removal Issue. I did not need a staff report (even though there was one) to make a decision on this matter. I personally went to the property and made my own determination whether the trees needed to be removed. Other councilors had done the same.

Example: \$25,000 Operations Loan for the Learning Center. True, I was not aware that the 20 acres had been used for collateral. But, I've never personally borrowed money without some kind of collateral being needed.

Example: Cemetery Deposit Issue. If you had attended the cemetery committee meeting and the council meeting when the \$25 cemetery deposit had been discussed, you would have known that a mere \$25 was not the purpose of the discussion. In fact, it had to do with who could profit from the sale of cemetery plots. The council, after due diligence, determined that the Vernonia

Memorial Cemetery, being a perpetual care cemetery was the only entity that should profit for the sale of cemetery plots.

Example: Hiring of New Administrator. It was never expressed verbally or in writing forbidding the council from hiring the interim administrator full time. And if there had been, would it be prudent to pass up a wonderful administrator just because of a rule of LOC.

I had always respected, if not always agreed, with your opinions. Why? I truly believed that you had done your homework and had all the pertinent facts. I hope in the future you will again aspire to form opinions and write articles based on facts.

Thank you,

Sally Harrison
Mayor
Vernonia

Sen. Johnson works hard for constituency

To the Editor:

As a citizen, Betsy Johnson is a tireless supporter for our communities. She has contributed generously to the senior centers, women's shelters, cultural events, children's hospitals, and environmental causes.

As a legislator, she is a tireless worker for creation of family wage jobs, school funding, accessible health care, and public safety. She has been an advocate for affordable housing, funding for public roads and much more than we can list here.

The harder a legislator works, the easier it is for them to make political enemies, so it was no surprise to see Senator Johnson come under fire for sponsoring SB 680. We do not believe a conflict of interest or abuse of the public trust has occurred because the Scappoose Airport has had a "through the fence" arrangement for several years. The purpose of SB 680 was to extend this benefit to other rural airports.

The Columbia, Tillamook, and Clatsop County Democratic Central Committees strongly support Senator Johnson. She has our trust and our deep appreciation for the fine work that she has done for all the citizens of Oregon.

Jolene Jonas, Chair

Columbia County DCC
Lenora Lawrence, Chair
Tillamook County DCC
Lawrence Taylor, Chair
Clatsop County DCC

Still no need for tree ordinance in Vernonia

To the Editor:

This letter is in regards to the article "Oregon has forty-five tree cities – Vernonia (and Banks) not included" in your last issue. I was a member of the committee that recommended that Vernonia not become a "Tree City USA." The article stated: "The committee majority was opposed to any city ordinances regarding tree care, even on public property." This is not a completely accurate statement. I believe the majority of the committee found that we felt strongly about encouraging tree care on public property but were opposed to a tree ordinance that would affect privately owned land.

It was determined that we already have a public parks committee and city employees who make decisions regarding the trees on public property. They follow the guidelines of an already established tree ordinance for our community. The appointment of a separate tree committee and another tree ordinance seemed redundant in our small community.

The committee presented a letter of recommendation to the city council suggesting several ways that we can support the planting of trees and tree care in our community. One of these suggestions was that a resource library be established in our public library to provide information on what trees are best suited to our area.

A discussion took place that our schools should be encouraged to celebrate Arbor Day. Committee member, Mike Pihl, of Mike Pihl Logging, offered to provide the trees for the school children as a way to encourage education and the planting of trees in our community.

Though some communities

have chosen to become a "Tree City USA," it is not for every community. Our small town can support tree care and the planting of trees without spending \$2 per capita as required by the "Tree City USA program."

Other communities that have attained "Tree City USA" status have found that a committee now determines what private land owners can do with the trees on their land. This is an issue that caused the majority of the committee much concern.

We can celebrate the wonderful tree-filled community that we live in and encourage tree care and the planting of trees without being regulated by a committee. We can also support our parks committee and encourage the care of trees and planting of trees on our community's public land without establishing another ordinance.

The recommendations presented to the City Council by the appointed committee are a matter of public record and can be viewed by anyone who is interested.

I have enclosed a copy of the recommendation made to City Council and would ask that you print it in your paper, along with my letter, to give a fair view of the committee's decision. I thank you for your time and cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

Kala F. Cota
Vernonia

To: City Council
From: Tree Committee (Noni Andersen, Brett Costley, Kala Cota, Mike Pihl, Derl Roberts)
CC: Mayor Harrison
Re: Tree Committee Recommendations
Date: March 2, 2006

The tree committee would like to thank the City Council and Mayor Harrison for the opportunity to serve on this committee. The tree committee considered many options and gathered much information since appointment in October.

After consideration, the tree committee recommends the council take the following actions:

- Ordinances – the council may consider better defining the process by

Please see page 21

Policy on Letters

The INDEPENDENT will not publish letters that include personal attacks on private citizens. Because of space limitations, preference will be given to brief letters, 300 words or less. All letters must be signed and include a verifiable address or phone number, and all letters are subject to editing for clarity or length.