

The INDEPENDENT

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"Voice of the Upper Nehalem River Valley"

September 20, 2007

Cost of Power



WOEC's Vernonia eastside substation is one of the co-op's substations that was built in a flood plain and will need to be replaced, a rate consideration for the future.

Citizen suggests better communications

Jim Tierney spoke from the floor at the beginning of the September 17 Vernonia City Council meeting, saying "I have been watching over the last year as the community has sort of divided into different camps and trying to think of ways to improve the situation." Tierney went on to say that what he sees as missing is a really good communication system and he suggested the council think about having a public information committee. Since these statements were made as Topics from the Floor, the council made no immediate response to the suggestion.

The first regular item of busi-

ness for council was to review a resolution authorizing an increased loan amount and changes in the reserve requirement on Phase II of the DEQ wastewater treatment project. City Administrator M.R. "Dick" Kline told council that this would increase the loan amount to \$8.6 million. Kline said that it would be smart to accept the change so the money is available, if needed. The repayment, if the whole amount was used, would be about \$300,000 per year for 20 years. Kline went on to say that he can't really tell what the payments will be on the Phase I amount used, as that phase of the project hasn't been closed out yet. He recommended closing that out, putting together a repayment schedule for that money first then deciding whether to use rates or bonds for the rest of the project. If a bond is used, loan reserves (the amount would be

\$146,000 for \$8.6 million) are not needed. If rates are used, the reserve must be in place. Council unanimously approved the resolution.

Council unanimously approved acceptance of the State Parks and Recreation Grant for up to \$245,600 for the Bicycle Skills Park. Before voting, Councilor Steve Whiteman voiced concerns that the city not end up responsible for fund-

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Low creek flows restrict use of water

The City of Vernonia announced, September 17, that due to stream flow on Rock Creek at 12 cubic feet per second (cfs) or less, a water shortage emergency has been declared at the "second level of concern." This is done in order to avoid depleting the water supply to the extent that it would be insufficient for human consumption, sanitation, fire protection, and aquatic life pro-

WOEC announces how rate increases will apply

West Oregon Electric Cooperative, Inc. (WOEC) announced their rate increase yesterday, after a public hearing and board meeting on Tuesday, September 18.

Attendees at a sparsely attended public hearing at the Vernonia Fire Hall, were invited to weigh in on how the first installment of a nine percent increase should be applied. WOEC had previously announced their would be increases of five percent this year and four percent in 2008.

After taking public input, the board met and decided on a new rate structure that includes an increase in the facility fee from \$17.50 to \$22.50. Kilowatt charges (usage) will be unchanged for most residential customers, who use less than 500 kilowatts per month. Customers who use over 500 kilowatts will see an increase from \$0.0836 per kilowatt to \$0.0857 per kilowatt. An increase from \$0.0701 to \$0.0719 will apply to residential customers using more than 1,200 kilowatts per month. These changes add up to a 5.32 percent increase.

Rates also are being increased for small commercial (5.10%), large industrial (3.25%), irrigation, street and security light customers. A full list of increases is available at WOEC.

tection.

During second level of concern irrigation, sprinkling and watering shall be permitted by residences as follows:

- West of State Avenue, on even-numbered calendar days and,
- East of State Avenue, on odd-numbered calendar days.

These restrictions remain in place until water flows exceed 12 cfs.

The increase takes effect October 1, 2007, though customers won't see it until they receive their bills in November.

General Manager Marc Farmer told *The INDEPENDENT*, "My recommendation to the board was that we put as much of the increase into the facility (category) as possible, for a couple of reasons. One, it's the most equitable form of increase as everyone pays regardless of usage, and, two, it makes it easier for us and the member to budget as it spreads across the system from everyone's usage."

The actual operational (facility) costs to WOEC per customer are estimated at \$61.00, though the facility fee is being raised to only \$22.50.

Next year, WOEC will do another financial analysis before putting the other four percent increase into place on October 1, 2008.

Thompson fills Court vacancy

The vacancy on the Vernonia Justice Court, caused by the death of Judge Rod McLean, was filled by Judge Wally Thompson.

Thompson had already been appointed Pro Tem in expectation of upcoming retirements, and stepped right into the open Justice Court position. Beginning October 3, there will be three Justice Courts in Columbia County; the Vernonia and Clatskanie schedules will be unchanged, and the new St. Helens Court will be held on Wednesdays at the Columbia County Fairgrounds.

McLean, who passed away September 12, was a long-time resident of Vernonia. A full obituary may be found on page 25.

**St. Mary's Annual
Quilt Fair
September 20, 21,
22 and 23
See page 9**