

The INDEPENDENT

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"Voice of the Upper Nehalem River Valley"

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Candy anyone?



Elsie Taylor, in front of Pretty Gifts and Things, hands out Halloween candy to a small princess during the Sidewalk Costume Parade.

Property values increase more than property taxes

More than 28,000 property tax statements have been mailed to Columbia County property owners.

Under the property tax system modified by Oregon voters in 1997, taxing districts have permanent tax rates for operating purposes. At the same time, maximum assessed values of individual properties are limited to a three percent increase each year unless the property is improved, subdivided, rezoned or disqualified from special assessment or exemption. These are "exceptions" to the three percent increase in maximum assessed value.

Although most property owners can expect a predictable three percent increase in their property tax bill each year, there is another source of change. "Whether a property owner's tax bill varies more

than three percent is largely the result of changes in local option and bonded debt levy rates, which are not limited by Measure 50," Columbia County Assessor Sue Poling said. This is why the percentage increase is not the same throughout the county. For instance, most tax bills for typical residential properties in the City of Columbia City increased 2.17 percent, while the rural residential properties in the Scappoose area increased 4.99 percent.

This is the final year for the Vernonia RFPD bonded debt levy approved by voters in March 1998.

County wide, the market value of all taxable property increased 15 percent, from \$5.97 billion to \$6.90 billion. The largest residential increase in market value, based on sales

Please see page 4

Flock of turkeys needed for food boxes

It is time, once again, to begin herding turkeys for the Vernonia Cares Christmas food boxes. Cares will provide groceries for an entire Christmas dinner, including a turkey, for low-income households. This is the fifth year for the Christmas Turkey Drive.

Currently, more than 300 clients representing 100 households are helped each month according to Director Sandy Welch. The goal this year is to provide 175 Christmas food boxes to clients as well as other households who need a helping hand during the holidays.

Between now and Thanksgiving, most grocery stores advertise their turkey promotions. The turkeys that are donated now are distributed only at Christmas, but now is the time

to gather and store them frozen for the Christmas food boxes.

The Saver Shield program, through Vernonia Sentry, has in the past allowed Cares to purchase turkeys at a reduced price. With the corporate decision to eliminate the Saver Shield program, more turkey donations are needed. Vernonia Cares has benefited from Sentry's assistance through check stand donations of turkeys, Christmas food box sponsorship and food barrel receptacles. Cares says, "Thank you, Sentry, for agreeing to offer the check stand giving again this year."

Beginning November 1, Sentry will begin a promotion for holiday turkeys, issuing a \$1.00 coupon for every \$35 spent per visit, up to \$210. This coupon must be used toward the pur-

chase of a turkey. Alcohol, lottery and tobacco purchases are excluded. This offer ends December 24.

Vernonia Cares will gratefully accept "Sentry's Turkey Coupons" to help with turkey purchases for the Food Boxes.

An entire Food Box (which includes a turkey) may be donated at a cost of \$30.00. A \$10.00 donation will allow Vernonia Cares to purchase a turkey. This may be done at any Sentry check stand or mailed Directly to Vernonia Cares at P.O. Box 126, Vernonia. Simply specify on the check that it is for the Christmas food boxes.

Call Pat or Bob Stacklie at 503-429-7563 with questions, or for turkey 'taxi' service. Suggested turkey weight for dona-

Please see page 4

City threatens publisher with possible lawsuit at meeting

According to the Oregon Attorney General's *Public Records and Meetings Manual*, "A news reporter has a clear right to disclose any matter covered in executive session that is not properly within the scope of the announced statutory authorization of the executive session." Executive sessions are closed to the public, but not to the media, except for specific topics included in the statute.

The stated reason for one of the two Vernonia City Council executive sessions on October 15 was ORS 192.660(2)(h), which is to consult with legal counsel regarding litigation likely to be filed. Since no legal counsel was in attendance, the session was not proper.

Instead of reporting on that executive session, *The Inde-*

pendent has opted to print the entire transcript below:

City Administrator M.R. "Dick" Kline said, "The reason we're here is not to discuss the McGaugh's in their capacity as newspaper people, I'll not refer to them as newspaper people. We're here to discuss, primarily, Clark McGaugh and his untruthfulness and his tendency to try to defame people and, and then lie about it. It is a serious issue, because it has caused harm in the community, and I'm not going to divulge specifics, but I think it was councilor Costley, again tonight, that picked Mr. McGaugh up on yet another bold faced lie. Again, it's not in his capacity as the publisher of the newspaper. It's in his capacity as a citizen

Please see page 14