

The INDEPENDENT

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"Voice of the Upper Nehalem River Valley"

March 20, 2008

Closer to Home



FEMA manufactured homes began arriving in Vernonia on March 17 with more to follow this week, after FEMA completed testing to make sure there were no formaldehyde issues with these homes. The homes, up to 21 on this site near the Library, will be used for temporary housing for those displaced by December's flood. The homes are FEMA's but the land belongs to Gordon Smith and Chuck Hendryx (two of the owners of the Vernonia SENTRY Market). FEMA is leasing the site and providing the homes, but the prep work and infrastructure – water, sewer, electric, etc. – has been provided by Smith and Hendryx.

Temporary homes start arriving for flood victims

Since early December 2007, Vernonia residents have been coping: first with flood waters that inundated their small community; then with cleanup; and throughout with delays in getting adequate temporary housing. The residents, the City of Vernonia, the Oregon Emer-

gency Management (OEM) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) have worked tirelessly to locate, site and test mobile homes for displaced Vernonia families.

Finally, the results are in.

The State of Oregon has accepted all 13 of the mobile homes tested for formaldehyde. Within days the new, 60-foot, 3-bedroom mobile homes were on their way to Vernonia.

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Disaster Recovery Center to close

Oregon Emergency Management (OEM) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) announced March 14 that the Vernonia Disaster Recovery Center will close permanently at 5:00 p.m. Friday, March 21. The Center at the Vernonia City Hall, 1001 Bridge Street, has been open since December 13, 2007, and

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Two detained in school explosion

The Vernonia Police Department, Vernonia Rural Fire Protection District, and Metro/West Ambulance were dispatched to Vernonia Middle School on March 6, around noon, regarding a possible explosion. It was determined that an improvised explosive device (IED) had exploded in a garbage can behind the Middle School during lunch period. The district cafeteria is located in the Middle School. No one was around the trash can when the IED exploded

and no one was injured.

Working with the Vernonia School District, the middle school (which temporarily houses some high school classes) was evacuated to adjacent Washington Grade School. The grade school and modular classroom buildings behind it were then locked down. As a safety precaution, the area around the middle school was cordoned off and traffic on Hwy. 47 (Bridge St.) in

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Council not ready to start on hiring a new administrator

A profile for City Administrator was the topic of a workshop the Vernonia City Council held when they met with Jennie Messmer of the League of Oregon Cities (LOC) before the

Possible school sites on review

Vernonia School District representatives will give a presentation tonight, March 20, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m., regarding the future location of Vernonia's schools, followed by a question and answer session. Members of the public will have an opportunity to help select the criteria by which any future site will be chosen. As part of the Vernonia 2020 planning process, attendees will also prioritize their goals for Vernonia in the year 2020.

Questions to be addressed include the following: What should be the main focus of City planning for the next 12 years? How does a change in school site fit into the community's vision of Vernonia in the year 2020? If new schools are built, should the site also provide other services to the Vernonia community? How will a new site impact transportation needs, access for school children, and the long-term health of Vernonia as a community?

Bridges Planning Group (BPG) will facilitate the meeting, which will be held at Vernonia Community Church, 957 State Avenue.

council meeting on March 17. At the workshop, the council fleshed out a job posting and reviewed a proposed timeline that would have allowed them to choose a new city administrator on June 30. Then they agreed not to start the hiring process, but to discuss further when to start it. They did not announce a reason for their reluctance to start the process of finding Vernonia a new city administrator. Council did agree to offer \$65,000 - 75,000 as a starting salary for the next administrator.

The regular council meeting started at 7:00 p.m. with an an-

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Easter Egg Hunts



Vernonia

Don't miss the Easter Egg Hunt in Hawkins Park on Saturday, March 22, starting at 10:00 a.m. Children up to 10 years-old are invited to join the hunt.

The Easter Bunny will be available for pictures with the children so bring your camera. The Vernonia Community PTA sponsors the event.

Banks

Don't miss the Banks Easter Egg Hunt on March 22, starting at 10:00 a.m. at Sunset Park. Children ages 1 to 12 years-old are welcome to join in the fun.

Need to update voter registration?

Citizens who are not registered voters and want to participate in the May 20, 2008, election, must register by April 29, 2008. Registration cards that are postmarked by this date are valid for the primary election. Registration cards are

available at U.S. Post Offices, city halls, county courthouses and Oregon DMV offices.

Because of the December flood, many registered voters in the Vernonia area are not yet living at their usual addresses

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