

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

No means yes to columns

On Friday, April 11, Interim City Administrator Aldie Howard said we were NOT going to get any columns from the city. Later the same day, we were told that the columnists had been told to go ahead and give us the columns. Well, the columns arrived and hopefully will continue to do so.

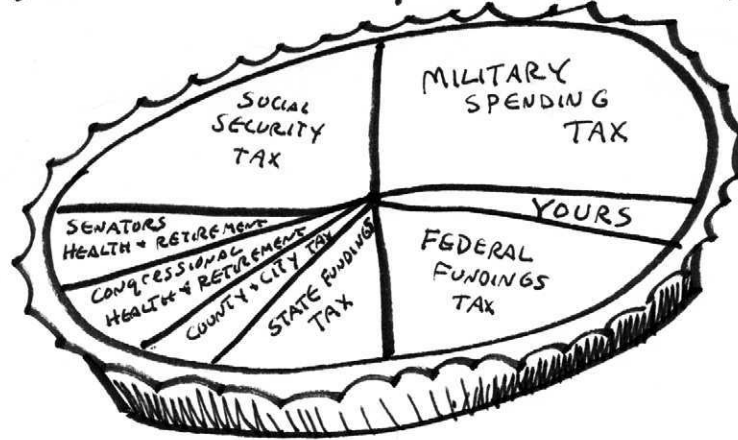
What does VCLC cost you?

Revenue and Expenditure reports started being available in the last month. We got a set on March 8. These are the first year-to-date numbers we've seen since well before the last budget meetings (in May of 2007). What do they have to say about the Vernonia Community Learning Center (VCLC)? Well, first some history. The grand opening was on September 6, 2006. It was built primarily using a \$500,000 CDBG grant. The grant requires the building to be used for 'it's stated purpose' for five years, otherwise the grant is in default and has to be paid back. The clock starts ticking when the construction is 'closed', meaning the building is done. Over a year and seven months have passed since the grand opening and the construction still has not "closed". That means the five year clock hasn't started ticking. That first year, city council approved a \$25,000 operating loan to tide the VCLC over while it got up and became self-supporting. The city came up with the other \$29,339 for the first year's expenses and an additional ongoing contract fee of \$3,200 per month for a Director (Jesse Jones) to run the VCLC. So far the VCLC is not self-supporting. City Council approved a budget for 07/08 of \$101,853 (including \$37,000 from grants). \$8,370 was expected to come from classes and center rents. As of 2/28/08, the VCLC had brought in only \$3,813.60 from sources other than the grant. That averages out to \$476.00 per month, not even enough to make the loan payments for that \$25,000 loan. We calculated the monthly expenses of the VCLC, with Jones contract, at \$4,319.85. VCLC is 'making' more money now with a number of agencies renting space there since the flood.

So, the city has budgeted \$156,192 for the VCLC's first two years while we've been paying \$11.50 extra on our water bill to re-build 'lost' loan reserves of \$108,000. Maybe the \$156,192 allocated to VCLC could have been better used?

APRIL FOOLS DAY

Has Been Unofficially Moved To The 15TH



WHAT PART OF THE PIE IS LEFT FOR YOU?

Out Of My Mind . . .

by Noni Andersen

Shutting down salmon fishing from Cape Falcon to the Mexican border will create enormous economic damage to coastal communities in Oregon and California. It is not only commercial fishermen who will lose a large part of their livelihood. Among those harmed will be people who earn all or part of their income from fishing charter businesses, restaurants, motels, bait shops and more. In an already shaky national economy, additional trauma in those areas will likely trigger a "domino effect," reducing income for public services such as libraries, law enforcement, street repairs and much more.

Rarely mentioned is that both federal and state governments have known for over 40 years that California water projects would divert water from the Sacramento, Feather and American Rivers, harming both the quantity and quality of water available for fish and other marine life.

So, if they knew about the eventual results, why was the water project built? For the benefit of industrial agriculture, of course. Corporate farms had long been dominant in the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys, and it wasn't until 1992 that federal policy included water allotments for fish and wildlife.

Why should Oregonians care? Aside from the obvious – that fish don't pay attention to county, state or national boundaries – all federal taxpayers helped pay for the agricultural water projects in California, as they have in Oregon's Klamath Basin. Remember, it was only two years ago that the Klamath River salmon fishery collapsed.

This isn't a diatribe against big agriculture. This is merely commentary on how we, human beings, repeatedly foul our own nests by acting as though we have the God-given ability to control the natural world for our own benefit. We display this chutzpah, erroneously, in many ways. Local history is a small example.

In 1996, cold weather, snow and rain combined to create floods that exceeded the previous "big one" about 100 years earlier. That storm also triggered landslides throughout western Oregon, most of them on steep slopes that had been clearcut within a few years. Did this hard-earned lesson teach us anything?

Between the floods of 1996 and 2007, we allowed construction of the Blue Heron Hollow apartment complex and a nearby industrial building; filled a natural flood plain and built a school on top of it; added several homes in another naturally low area adjacent to Rock Creek at the end of Grant Avenue and A Street, allowed more fill and asphalt in another low area off C Street; approved development in the flood plain industrial zone along N. Mist Drive.

A few of those structures were high enough to avoid flooding. Of course, they displaced enough water to cause greater harm elsewhere.

Also, between the floods of '96 and '07, clear-cutting continued, with a few restrictions. The experts at the OSU School of Forestry clearcut steep slopes at Marshfield, near Clatskanie, and were surprised when landslides damaged or even destroyed homes.

We humans are slow learners.