

The INDEPENDENT

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"Voice of the Upper Nehalem River Valley"

June 5, 2008

Civics in action...



County Commissioner Hyde sits on the stage at Washington Grade School after introducing Congressman David Wu, shown taking questions from students. See article below.

Wu and students discuss government, politics

Congressman David Wu was in Vernonia, May 27, starting the day with Vernonia middle and high school students in the Washington Grade School gymnasium.

Wu was introduced to the

students by County Commissioner Tony Hyde who told those present that Wu was here to "do what he normally does – connect with students."

"I have done, probably, 300 school visits in my years in con-

gress," began Wu's discussion, "There is nothing more important in our community than what's going on in your classrooms. That's important to society."

Questions from students ranged from "What are your views on Iraq?" to "How can we do a better job of preparing for natural disasters?" and included questions on his views on marijuana, dependence on oil, the right to bear arms, global warming, and President Bush.

The short version of his answer to the Iraq question started with, "It's a lot easier to get into a war than to get out of one," and ended with, "We need to start extricating ourselves from this war right away."

Four federal appropriations that Congressman Wu has requested, because of his concern for Vernonia, are funds for

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Voters recall two Jewell School Board members, two other members resign

Two members of the Jewell School Board were recalled in the May 20 Clatsop County election. Karl Meier and Ann Samuelson lost their seats after a recall campaign put together by former board member Ulrich "Oly" Schockelt, with Carrie Thompson and Marsha Tisdale.

The recall petition stated that Samuelson and Meier were "violating executive session provisions of Oregon's public meeting law" after a January board meeting where the inter-

im superintendent's contract was extended by two years.

Two other board members resigned as the final ballots were being counted; Cathy Rozinek and Allen Foster had been on the board since spring.

The resignations and recalls leave one board member, Tania Skinner. Usually the remaining board members would appoint new members, but when there is no majority remaining, the open positions must be filled by appointments by the Northwest Regional ESD.

Vernonia has new interim city administrator, keeps planner

Mayor Sally Harrison announced that the city has a new Interim City Manager as of the June 2 Vernonia City Council meeting. Harrison introduced Jim Johnson, with little fanfare, saying he came to Vernonia through the League of Oregon Cities. The announcement came at the beginning of the meeting, although council did not officially approve Johnson's contract until the end of the meeting, after an executive session to review the performance of a city employee. There was no public discussion prior to the vote on Johnson's contract, which was unanimous.

(There will be more information in the next issue of *The IN-*

DEPENDENT, after there is time for an interview with the new administrator.)

Council approved the final lease agreement between the Vernonia Community Learning Center and Columbia County (for the Columbia County Flood Relief offices). The County will pay the city \$1,400 per month for January 1 through June, 2008. Thereafter, an initial one-year extension starts July 1, 2008 with lease payments dropping to \$600 per month.

The Vernonia Community Learning Center director contract was set for renewal on July 1, 2008, though it was not included in the proposed budget.

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Bridges Planning Group presents final report on Vernonia project

The 2020 Vernonia Bridges Planning Group gave council a final overview of their project at the June 2 council meeting. The highest priorities, identified based on the public meetings held, are:

1. Create/build indoor and outdoor facilities (including places for teens).

2. Economic development (while preserving small town character).

The recommended projects that came out of the meetings to create youth-oriented facilities are:

- Creating an outdoor amphitheater,
- creating a teen lounge, and
- repurposing the middle school building for active uses.

On the economic development priority, the recommended projects are:

- Marketing Vernonia to residents and consumers throughout Oregon,
- Plugging the leaks; capture

resident spending in the local economy, and

- providing business development and management assistance.

The recommended actions from the project are:

- Marketing the future of Vernonia to residents, because "Vernonia is better together!"
- fostering cooperation through the Agents of Recovery Collaborative (ARC); a group of involved citizens that acted as the information sharing stakeholder group.

- Formation of a Youth Advisory Committee (YAC).
- Reviving a Business Assistance Team (BAT).

The Group also lauded Vernonia for having already identified, and working toward, some of these goals.

A project notebook with more information was given to city councilors with hope that the information will be used to create a better Vernonia.