

# Council hears from citizens, sets date for public hearing on hiring

After an executive session at a special council meeting on August 6, the Vernonia City Council voted to accept a cash offer of \$67,000 for 919 Bridge St. (known as old City Hall). The property was originally listed for \$150,000, but council subsequently asked for a new appraisal of the property that would take into account the current condition of the building and that the portion now housing a realty office would be removed to allow sidewalk access to the courtyard of the Vernonia Community Learning Center. The current appraisal was for \$85,000.

In accepting the offer of \$67,000, Council cited potential loss of value if the building sits empty through winter, and other reasons (For more information see "Council accepts offer for old City Hall," page 1).

At the August 18 council meeting, Council passed a res-

olution giving Interim City Administrator Jim Johnson authority to sign the closing papers for the sale, which is expected to close by the end of this month. In Mayor Sally Harrison's absence, the meeting was chaired by Council President Steve Whiteman.

Also at the August 18 meeting, citizen Gene Winningham suggested that, except for Hwy 47 (Bridge St.), Vernonia streets should be designed to allow for pedestrian sidewalks on one side and multi-use (skateboards, bikes, scooters, wheelchairs and golf carts) on the other. Winningham told council that, by ordinance, sidewalks are required on only one side of the street. He added that he has talked to someone who has agreed to write a grant for this and that this would allow Vernonia to become a "mecca for retired and people who use alternate trans-

portation." Since Winningham spoke during the Topics from the Floor portion of the meeting, council is not required to take action and did not do so.

Sandy DeWeber of D.A.D.s Recycling gave council an update of their progress in meeting the move deadline of August 31. She told council they met with DEQ, Jim Johnson, and Joann Glass on Tuesday, August 12, and are working on their suggestions, plus getting the grass mowed on the land they are looking at so they will know the actual property boundaries.

Leonard Simmons told council that he has met with Mr. Johnson a couple of times and that Johnson apologized to him for the way the city has treated him. Simmons said he appreciated the apology. He had previously told Council about his issue with the city turning his water off after he stopped paying

the extra \$12.00 fee, while Aldie Howard was interim city administrator.

Council agreed with a proposal presented by Police Chief Mat Workman to have the city attorney draft a resolution adding a Training Fee to fines imposed by the Justice Court for crimes and violations within the City of Vernonia. This system is already in place in Scappoose (\$30) and St. Helens (\$20), and is used for police training and training-related expenses. Workman cited the increasing amount of training, and associated costs, being required of police officers as the reason for the request.

In other business, council;  
 • approved an amended version of a Recruitment Profile

that will be used in the hiring process for the City Administrator position.

• heard from Johnson that city planners from other areas (including Washington County and Beaverton) have agreed to serve on a steering committee to work on Vernonia's Master Plan.

• agreed that Johnson should continue to attend meetings of the Vernonia Community Learning Center committee.

The next regular meeting of the Vernonia City Council will be September 2 (Tuesday due to Labor Day), at 7:00 p.m., at City Hall, and will start with a public hearing to take public input on position requirements for the city administrator hiring process.

## Rep. Wu returns to Vernonia to meet with residents



State Sen. Betsy Johnson and Congressman Davis Wu discuss local topics at meeting in Vernonia.

Congressman David Wu was in Vernonia August 8, after having visited Scappoose on August 7, going door to door to talk to citizens. In Vernonia, Wu first joined the Oregon Solutions meeting held that morning at the Scout Cabin, before heading to Black Bear Coffee Company in search of Vernonians, who were in short supply

at 10:00 a.m. on that Friday.

At the Oregon Solutions meeting, Wu heard that many Vernonians were frustrated by the length of time it is taking to get a site and the funding needed to move Vernonia schools out of the flood plain. Wu told *The Independent* over coffee that he, "understands the frustration of people who had wet

basements and whose kids were bussed to Scappoose.

"It's my job to be an advocate for Vernonia...the ombudsman. A lot of that is finding the right box, the right fit. Traditionally, schools have been a local responsibility. If we can find the right box, like the \$200,000 for technology and equipment that is under threat of veto, we can help," he went on to say.

Before leaving for other stops on his schedule, Wu said, "I've been working on a lot of things that don't get much attention, like solar power. I obtained funding for community college training for solar installation. And, put together an amendment to use biomass – not corn or sugar that we can eat – but focusing on using dead trees (which we have a lot of) and do more research to use the entire plant."

## Additional town halls

From page 1 first meetings.

In general, the information provided pointed to the need for each flood-affected homeowner to work closely with the Columbia County Flood Relief staff on their specific situation.

Another meeting is scheduled for September 22. Watch for information on time and place.

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