

Council seeks Block Grant, discusses communication with Mayor

Vernonia City Council met in Executive Session on Saturday, November 15, and along with a community panel and an employee panel, interviewed three candidates for the open City Administrator position. The Council has not announced a selection in public session, but will do so once an offer has been made and accepted.

After a public hearing at the November 17 Council meeting, Council approved a motion to apply for a 2008 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). The grant funds, if received, are expected to go towards further flood relief efforts for affected homeowners. The grant awards will probably not be announced until sometime in early 2009 and would most likely be around \$500,000.

Interim City Administrator Jim Johnson gave a short presentation on Urban Renewal Districts (URD) after a recommendation to do so by the Eco-

nomics Development Committee. URDs are used to fund improvements (street, utility, etc.), rehabilitation of existing buildings, property purchase or improvements, and re-sale or lease of property.

URDs are funded by a cap on property taxes so that any increases in property tax revenue (for a given time period, usually 10-30 years) goes to repay loans used by the URD. This allows for improvements that can be expected to raise property values in the long run. The base property tax amount (below the increase) is still used as before. The risk is that the new 'base' property tax freezes the amount the city has for other uses. No more than 25 percent of assessed property tax value, or 25 percent of the city's area, can be included in a URD. No specific URD projects have been identified, this was an informational discussion only.

Discussion during a work session on communications issues included Councilor Cindy Ball telling Mayor Sally Harrison that she has heard about downtown parking meters and that more than one person on the street told her Harrison has made promises to Tim Bero about things at the airport. Ball noted that neither of these items has been discussed by the council or in a council meeting.

Harrison said she wanted to discuss the parking meters with business and community before bringing it to council and that she made no promises to Bero, although she and Bero have discussed how his ideas might benefit the city.

Councilor Brett Costley said, "Sally, I think your enthusiasm comes across as being the city's. You need to make it clear you are not speaking for the city."

Councilor Steve Whiteman then spoke, saying, "None of us

have any power outside the council. Sally's strength is to go do things that help the city appropriately. The other side is that sometimes the perception out there is that Sally's word is a guarantee."

Johnson summarized the discussion, "So, it sounds like it would be best to run ideas by council first." Harrison thanked the council for pointing out these issues and concerns and agreed to make changes based on the discussion.

In other business, council:

- viewed a Powerpoint presentation on the Geographic Information System (GIS) the city has started working on. GIS is a sophisticated mapping program that can be used to view maps with overlays, such as sewer, street, flood area, etc.

- held an executive session to discuss the employment of a public officer, but had no discussion or statements in open session.

The next Vernonia City Council meeting will be Tuesday, December 2, at City Hall, starting at 7:00 p.m. The meeting is being changed so interested persons may attend the Columbia County Board of Commissioners Public Hearing at the Scout Cabin, on Monday, December 1 at 7:00 p.m., regarding a zoning change request for property at the airport.

"What we're really talking about is a wonderful day set aside on the fourth Thursday of November when no one diets. I mean, why else would they call it Thanksgiving?"

— Erma Bombeck

Happy Thanksgiving

Community Calendar

VERNONIA			MIST-BIRKENFELD		
Alcoholics Anonymous	Monday	6:30 p.m., 410 North Street	M-BRFPD Board Business Mtg.	2nd Tuesday	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
American Legion Post #119	2nd Thursday	7:00 p.m., 627 Adams Avenue	M-BRFPD Board Workshop	4th Tuesday	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
Arts & Crafts Society	2nd Thursday	2:00 p.m., City Library	M-B Ambulance Drill	1st & 2nd Thursdays	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
Booster Club	2nd Wednesday	7:00 p.m., VHS Library	M-B Fire Drill	1st & 2nd Wednesdays	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
Boy Scout Troop 201	Tuesdays	7:00 p.m., Scout Cabin	M-B Helping Circle	2nd Monday	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
Boy Scout Troop 860	Wednesdays	7:00 p.m., LDS Church	M-B SAR Drill	3rd Wednesday	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
Cemetery Beautification Comm.	2nd Thursday	6:30 p.m., City Hall	M-B Volunteer Assoc.	1st Tuesday	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
CERT	4th Wednesday	For Info Call 503-429-3018	Natal Grange	2nd Wednesday	7:30 p.m., Natal Grange Hall
Chamber of Commerce	2nd Wednesday	For Info Call 503-429-6081	T.O.P.S.	Mondays	6:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
Community Coalition	2nd Monday	12:30 p.m. School District Ofc.	Upr Nehalem Watershed Council	For date call 429-2401	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
Cub Scout Pack 201	Scout Cabin	For Info Call 503-429-4250			
Friends of the Library	1st Tuesday	7:00 p.m., Vernonia Library			
Girl Scouts, Neighborhood 4-2		For Info Call 503-819-0143			
Hands On Art Committee	1st & 3rd Thursdays	4:00 p.m., City Hall	BANKS		
Izaak Walton League	3rd Thursday	For location call 503-429-7193	Alcoholics Anonymous	Fridays	7:30 p.m., Methodist Church
Lions Club	1st & 3rd Tuesdays	6:30 p.m., Buckhorn Restaurant	Alcoholics Anonymous	Wednesdays	7:30 p.m., Methodist Church
Municipal Airport Committee	4th Thursday	7:00 p.m., City Hall	American Legion Post #90	2nd Tuesdays	7:30 p.m., Main Street Post
Narcotics Anonymous	Saturdays	7:00 p.m., 410 North Street	Banks City Council	2nd Tuesday	7:30 p.m., City Hall
Pioneer Museum		For Info Call 503-429-3713	Banks Fire District #13	2nd Wednesday	7:00 p.m., Station 13
Public Works Committee	4th Tuesday	7:00 p.m., City Hall	Banks Library Commission	3rd Tuesday	7:00 p.m., City Library
Vernonia Cares Directors		For Info call 503-429-1414	Banks Planning Commission	Last Tuesday	7:00 p.m., City Hall
Vernonia City Council	1st & 3rd Mondays	7:00 p.m., City Hall	Banks School Board	2nd Monday	7:30 p.m., Jr. High Library
Vernonia Community PTA	2nd Wednesday	7:00 p.m., WGS Library	Banks Youth Group	Sundays, Wednesdays	7:00 p.m., UMC Youth Bldg.
Vernonia Grange	3rd Monday	7:00 p.m., Grange Hall	Chamber of Commerce	1st Thursday	12:30 p.m., Fire District Office
Vernonia Health Center	2nd Monday	6:00 p.m., 510 Bridge St.	CPO 14	3rd Monday	7:00 p.m., City Library
Vernonia Learning Center	1st Wednesday	6:00 p.m., VLC	Friends of the Library	2nd Tuesday	7:00 p.m., City Library
Vernonia Parks Committee	3rd Wednesday	6:30 p.m., City Hall	Lions Club	1st & 3rd Mondays	7:00 p.m., Brown Derby
Vernonia Planning Comm.	1st & 3rd Thursdays	7:00 p.m., City Hall	Sunset Park Assoc.	3rd Wednesday	8:00 p.m., Gun Club
Vernonia Pride	3rd Thursday	1:00 p.m., City Hall	T.O.P.S.	Wednesdays	7:00 p.m., Administration Bldg.
Vernonia Ridge Riders	Last Thursday	7:00 p.m., Senior Center			
Vernonia RFPD Board	2nd Tuesday	6:00 p.m., Fire Station	COLUMBIA COUNTY (All meet in St. Helens unless otherwise noted.)		
Vernonia School Board	2nd Thursday	6:00 p.m., District Office	Board of Commissioners	Wednesdays	10 a.m., Courthouse
Vernonia Sr. Center Board	2nd Friday	1:00 p.m., Senior Center	Citizens for Senior Justice	2nd Tuesday	7:00 p.m., Sunset Park Church
Vernonia Transfer Station	2nd & 4th Saturdays, 8 a.m.-2 p.m.	Behind VHS	Columbia Soil & Water District	3rd Wednesday	7:30 p.m., NRCS, 2514 Sykes
Vern. Volunteer Ambulance Assoc.	1st, 3rd & 4th Tuesday	7:00 p.m., Fire Station	County Fair Board	2nd Monday	7:00 p.m., Fairgrounds 4-H Bldg.
Vernonia Volunteer Firefighters	2nd Monday	7:00 p.m., Fire Station	County Parks Commission	3rd Monday	6:00 p.m., 1054 Oregon St.
WOEC Directors	3rd Tuesday	7:00 p.m., WOEC	Mental Health Advisory Comm.	Quarterly	For Info call 503-397-7211
			Comm. on Children & Families	3rd Thursday	5:30 p.m. OSU Ext., 505 N. Hwy. 30
			Local Alcohol & Drug Plann. Comm.	Quarterly	For Info call 503-397-7211

Organizations and meeting dates not listed may be included by calling 429-9410 or by mail to The INDEPENDENT, 725 Bridge Street, Vernonia, OR 97064.