

# The INDEPENDENT

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"Voice of the Upper Nehalem River Valley"

December 4, 2008

## Joyous sounds



The Vernonia High School Choir was a crowd pleaser at last night's high school/middle school holiday concert as they performed *Do You Hear What I Hear?*

## Change to airport zoning brings crowd to hearing

Before an audience of about 45, the Columbia County Board of Commissioners held a public hearing on a requested zone change for property adjacent to the Vernonia Airport. Held at the Vernonia Scout Cabin, the hearing started at 7:00 p.m. on December 1 and continued until almost 1:00 a.m. on December 2 in order for all concerned to be heard. Commissioner Tony Hyde chaired the meeting, still wearing a back brace because of his recent injury and appearing to be in discomfort.

With a stack of testimony almost a foot high already in front of them, the Commissioners took further testimony on Tim and Michelle Bero's request to change zoning on 27.8 acres of a 76 acre parcel they own near the airport. The parcel is currently zoned PF-76 (primary forest usage); the change requested is for an airport-related industrial zone.

A staff report was presented by the County's Chief Planner, Glen Higgins, who explained the exceptions to existing Com-

prehensive Plans and State-wide Planning Goals that the zoning change would require. Higgins concluded by saying that staff supports the zoning change.

The Board then took testimony in favor of the zone change, starting with Tim Bero and his attorney. Bero stated that his reason for this request is to help bring jobs to Vernonia. His proposal includes extending the airport runway, adding small industrial buildings, a campground, necessary road and infrastructure improvements and use of existing ponds on the property for fire suppression.

Andrew Golmb, from Poland, then spoke. Golmb plans to be in partnership with Bero in a business at the airport (if zoning is changed). The proposed business would bring in airplane fuselages, add U.S. built components to complete the plane, then sell to someone who will fly it away from Vernonia Airport. According to Golmb, the plan is to build

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## City, others seek watershed mapping

At the December 2 Vernonia City Council meeting, Mayor Sally Harrison told council that she, Interim City Administrator Jim Johnson and Upper Nehalem Watershed Council Director Maggie Peyton met earlier in the day with two representatives from the State Water Resource Board to discuss flood control. Future meetings are expected to be held with the Corps of Engineers to try to get headwater mapping to use for flood control purposes.

Harrison accepted Kevin Hudson's resignation from the Planning Commission. Hudson has been elected to a position on the Council, which requires him to resign from the Commission.

Interim Chief of Police, Mike Kay, showed council a number of new forms the police department will be using, such as for

nuisance abatement purposes. Kay told council there are currently 11 nuisance abatements in process. After initial notification of an existing nuisance, the property owner has 30 days to comply before receiving a citation to appear in Justice Court.

Council re-adopted a conceptual airport layout plan that had been engineered in 2001. Johnson explained that council probably adopted it in the past but no records exist of the adoption.

Johnson told council that a piece of property a mobile home in the flood plain on Birch Street, has been repossessed and the federal Housing & Urban Development agency was authorized to offer it to the city for \$1.00. Council approved the \$1.00 purchase. The property will not be eligible for construction in the future.

A fee schedule was adopted by council that allows for collection of the \$12.00 sewer loan fee and the \$2.00 park fee from people who are otherwise exempt from paying water and sewer bills because of non-use.

The next City Council meeting is scheduled for December 15 at City Hall starting at 7:00 p.m.

### Bank Braves go to state Football finals

The Banks Braves football team, under Head Coach Ben Buchanan, go to state finals at Oregon State University in Corvallis this Saturday, Dec. 6 for the first time since 1949. The game starts at noon.

**GO BRAVES!**

### Holiday Events

#### Lighted Christmas Parade & Tree Lighting

Don't miss the Lighted Christmas Parade, December 6, starting at 6:00 p.m.

Santa will light the Vernonia City Christmas Tree and talk to kids after the parade.

#### Christmas Bazaar

Vernonia "Christmas in the Country" Booster Bazaar is Saturday, December 6, from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and Sunday from Noon to 5:00 p.m. in the Vernonia Middle School cafeteria.

#### Pictures with Santa

Pictures with Santa (\$5 each or four for \$15) on Saturday, December 6, from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at Vernonia Head Start, 500 California Avenue. Holiday sweets, hot cocoa and apple cider will also be for sale.

#### Vernonia Schools Holiday Programs

Washington Grade School, December 17 at 7:00 p.m.

Mist Grade School, December 19 at 6:00 p.m.