

# The INDEPENDENT

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"Voice of the Upper Nehalem River Valley"

February 5, 2009

## Giddyup donkeys...



Eager riders and sometimes balky donkeys combined for an evening of laughs for those attending the Donkey Basketball games at Vernonia High School on Friday, January 30.

## Vernonia ordinance targets "dangerous" buildings

Vernonia's City Council unanimously passed Ordinance No. 855, "An Ordinance Related to Dangerous Buildings", at their January 20 meeting. The council has been working on development of this ordinance since a few months after the

flood of 2007. Council, and especially Mayor Sally Harrison, expressed concern about the condition of businesses that were flooded on December 3, 2007.

The ordinance defines "unsafe buildings" as those which

are structurally unsafe or not provided with adequate egress, or which constitute a fire hazard, or are otherwise dangerous to human life. Such buildings are "hereby declared to be public nuisances and shall be abated by repair, rehabilitation, demolition or removal..."

Any building deemed unsafe may be entered and inspected by the city's building official. If the property owner will not allow the inspection, the city will be required to obtain a court warrant to enter the premises.

At no time during the process leading up to the adoption of this ordinance have city staff or city council indicated which building or buildings were of concern to them, nor indicated whether they had talked to any property owners about such

**Please see page 5**

## Citizen sues for sewer line damage

The City of Vernonia was served with a lawsuit filed February 3 in Columbia County Circuit Court by Vernonia resident Dawn Thompson.

Thompson's suit claims the City of Vernonia has a sewer line under her house that failed, on or about August 9, 2008, causing structural damage, interior floor sagging, foundation collapse, noxious odors and deposit of sewage on her property.

The suit also names City Bank, N.A., who Thompson

bought the property from, as a defendant. Thompson is asking \$220,000 plus \$2,089 per month for loss of use, and the removal of the sewer line, from the City of Vernonia, and \$225,000 plus \$2,089 from City Bank, plus costs of the lawsuit and "further equitable relief as the court deems just."

The notice was served on the City's attorney, Jordan Schrader PC, and will now go to the City's insurer, CCIS, for review and response.

## Airport zone change gets tentative okay from BOC

The Columbia County Board of Commissioners tentatively approved a zone change request, at their January 28 meeting, for property owned by Tim and Michelle Bero near the Vernonia Airport.

The Beros' request was to rezone 27.8 acres from Primary Forest to Airport Industrial. The Board of Commissioners held the required public hearing December 1, 2008, at the Scout Cabin in Vernonia, with 45-50 persons in attendance.

Bero told the Board that he

barn-like industrial buildings on his property that might employ approximately 20 people per building. Bero has suggested other potential changes that include extending the Vernonia Airport runway onto his property, adding camping for airport users and turning an existing house on the property into a bed and breakfast.

Most of the testimony opposing the zone change came from nearby neighbors, who addressed Bero's need to use an

**Please see page 4**

## Copter crash kills Banks grad



Chief Warrant Officer Joshua Tillery, a 1995 Banks High School graduate, died when two helicopters crashed on Monday, January 26, in Kirkuk, Iraq. Three other members of his squadron also died in the crash.

Tillery started U.S. Army basic training in August 1995 and was in his second tour in Iraq. He had served in the 82nd Airborne Division and the 2nd Infantry Division, before becoming a helicopter pilot with the 10th Mountain Division, 6th Aviation Brigade. He had been

awarded two Air Medals, a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star.

Tillery was stationed in Ft. Lewis, Washington, when he met Stephanie Charlene, also stationed there. They married in 2001 and have three sons – Alec, Colin and Hayden. Mrs. Tillery is currently expecting the couple's fourth son.

Governor Ted Kulongoski has ordered all flags at public institutions to be flown at half-staff tomorrow, February 6, in memory of Chief Warrant Officer Tillery.

A full obituary is on page 21.