

Council increases some rates, looks at changing city committees

The Vernonia City Council, on February 2, reviewed Resolution No. 2-09, which makes more changes to the water and sewer bills. These changes include a \$10.00 per month fee for No Service (\$5.00 for water and \$5.00 for sewer). Council was told that these fees apply to people who reside in Vernonia part-time, during the months they are not in residence here.

The resolution also clarified that a \$35.00 fee (\$60.00 for those outside the city) previously in the resolution applies to requests to turn service either on or off. The previous resolution applied only to requests to turn service on. A refundable security deposit in the amount of \$102.00 was also added with the adoption of this resolution. Council unanimously approved the adoption of this resolution.

Property owner Leo Stoddard, who owns a multi-family rental unit in Vernonia, had told council at a previous meeting that with the change to utility billing by each equivalent dwelling unit (EDU), rather than per meter, has caused his units' utility bill to jump from around \$160.00 to over \$700.00 per

month. Stoddard suggested that Vernonia move to an actual usage base from their current billing system. Council responded that they can't change rates (although they have now done so twice) until a rate study is done, which will be months away.

After more discussion of the effects of the change to EDU billing, council asked staff to come to the next meeting with additional information on the impact on multi-family units and other possible options for the handling of EDU's in those cases. Discussion of possible options included phasing in the change or reducing the increased amount.

At their last two council meetings, January 20 and February 2, the City Council has been discussing possible changes to involvement with their committees. Interim City Administrator Jim Johnson told council that, in many cities, councilors act as the chairperson, agenda setter and minute taker on city committees. Councilors agreed to "look at the opportunity to chair a committee". Mayor Sally Harrison

agreed to take on the Economic Development Committee, and the Airport Committee. Councilor Brett Costley will attend Parks Committee meetings, while Councilor Cindy Ball goes to the Cemetery Beautification Committee and the to-be-set-up Public Safety Committee. Randy Parrow will oversee the Vernonia Community Learning Center Committee and the Library Board, and Kevin Hudson chose the Unmet Needs Committee and the Public Works Committee.

Interim Police Chief Mike Kay told council that he had obtained two refurbished police car camera systems, free, and would not need the \$8,700 budgeted for the purchase of the ICOP camera system. Kay told council the systems he was given are older, VHS based systems rather than computer based ICOP systems, but will meet the needs of the department. Kay then asked council if he could use the \$8,700 for other department needs, which he did not identify. Council unanimously approved his request.

In other business, council:

- Approved, on February 2, a

request by Mike Seager that allows him to meet flight training customers at the Vernonia Airport and fly them to Scappoose where the actual training takes place.

- approved as surplus a 2004 Crown Victoria owned by the police department. The department now has a \$230.00 per month lease on a 2004 Ford Truck and is reducing the department's fleet of vehicles.

- heard two high school members of the latest Ford Family Foundation training request approval for an outdoor amphitheater. Harrison told the students that they need to find a site for such a project and come up with some more definite plans before the council

would be able to take action on such a plan.

- heard a presentation by the Rock'em, Sock'em Robots team, which recently competed in Lego robotics, and had done research on alternative flood protection measures for homeowners, such as houses that are moored and float up during flooding.

The next regular city council meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 17 at 7:00 p.m., at City Hall.

Building Ordinance

From page 1
concerns.

Ordinance No. 855 goes into affect 30 days from the adoption, on February 19.

ODOT completes 100 bridges, provides living wages

By Matt Garrett, Director, Oregon Dep't. of Transportation

Not since 1935 and the Work Projects Administration has there been so much focus on the potential economic stimulus and job creation provided by transportation projects. In Oregon, we already have a strong record in delivering

Steep hike in local unemployed number

Columbia County's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate rose to 9.6 percent in December, a significant increase from the previous month (8.6%) and higher than the year before (6.0%). The rate was higher than the statewide rate of 9.0 percent. The national rate is 7.2 percent. Total employment dropped by 189 to 22,890 and the number of unemployed rose by 282 to 2,411. Total employment this December was 260 fewer than one year before and there were 950 more people unemployed.

bridge preservation programs that stimulate the economy with well-paying and sustainable highway construction jobs.

This fall, the Oregon Department of Transportation marked a milestone as we completed the 100th bridge in a 10-year program to protect Oregon bridges and stimulate our state's economy. ODOT is helping Oregon maintain its aging transportation infrastructure – and putting Oregonians to work.

In 2003, the Oregon Legislature created the \$1.3 billion OTIA III State Bridge Delivery Program to repair or replace 365 highway bridges throughout Oregon. ODOT is on schedule to complete the bridge program by 2013. While other states postponed preventive maintenance or replacement of bridges built in the 1950s and '60s, Oregon invested in its transportation assets before they became even more expensive to repair.

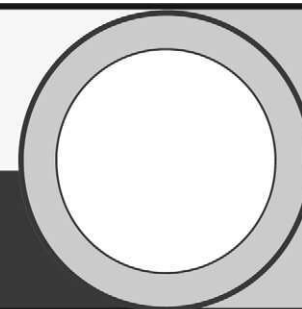
These 100 new or renovated bridges span the state. They include the sleek span of steel

girders that make up the new Hilgard Interchange Bridge on Interstate 84 near La Grande and the Green Springs Drive Bridge in Klamath Falls. Drivers in Clackamas County have no doubt noticed the newer, safer bridges on Highway 224, but motorists heading to or from La Pine will likely slip over the two bridges replaced nearby, barely noticing them from the rest of Oregon 58.

What these bridges have in common is that they were built largely by Oregon workers employed by ODOT contractors. No matter where the work takes them, these workers hail from almost every county across the state. As of Sept. 30, 2008, the most recent date for which we have data, we calculate that so far they have brought home more than \$29 million in total payroll.

But these wages benefitted people beyond the iron workers and cement masons, carpenters and operating engineers. Their paychecks have a "multiplier" effect on the businesses

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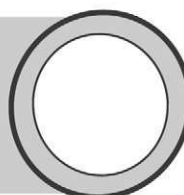
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