

"It's necessary," USMS chief says

Asked about the funding changes to Columbia and Multnomah Counties, William C. Knaust, Chief Deputy U.S. Marshal for the District of Oregon, told *The INDEPENDENT* that the U.S. Marshals Service houses prisoners in the Federal Detention Center (FDC) in Sheridan, and in 16 jails throughout Oregon. The USMS uses Intergovernmental Agreements (IGA) with local jail facilities to compensate them for all costs associated with housing federal prisoners.

The Multnomah County Jail has been the primary IGA facility in the Portland area for

many years, Knaust explained. Outlying IGA facilities, including the Columbia County Jail, have typically been utilized when the USMS prisoner population expands, or when fewer prisoner beds are available at FDC Sheridan and/or in Multnomah County.

According to Knaust, the USMS has experienced a declining prisoner population. This, combined with the fact that both FDC Sheridan and Multnomah County have more prisoner beds available, made it necessary for the USMS to reduce its dependence on outlying facilities.

Horse droppings, police staffing again show up on Council agenda

What can be done about horse droppings on the trail to Vernonia Lake? That was one of the questions asked of City Council at the June 1 Vernonia City Council meeting. This topic seems to come up every spring or summer and Council has no easy answers to give. Ideas ranged from putting up "clean up after your animals" signs instead of "Clean up after your dogs" current signage. After some discussion, Mayor Sally Harrison asked city staff to contact local equestrian groups for possible solutions.

Council discussed the pros and cons of hiring a part-time Chief of Police to handle administrative functions, while restructuring the patrol functions into a Captain, Sergeant and two patrol officers. This would provide flexibility to allow 24-hour coverage. Interim City Administrator Jim Johnson will prepare a statement on the expected financial impact of such a decision for council consideration at the next meeting.

Johnson read a letter from Officer Jon Eggers of the St. Helens Police Department, who was requested to do a review of the use of force by the Vernonia Police Department. This had to do with the tasing of a young man on March 20 at an underage drinking party. Eggers letter was three pages long and very detailed in his review of all information provided to him by the police department and EMS, including interviews by Vernonia police of the witnesses following the incident and subsequently prepared

typed documents of their statements. Eggers conclusion was, "After reviewing all of the provided documents pertaining to this incident, it is my opinion that the use of force, including the use of the taser X26, was justified in this specific incident."

Officer Egger's letter did not indicate that he interviewed any of the involved parties, only that he relied on documents provided by the Vernonia Police Department. Council had no questions.

Council was asked by the Unmet Needs Committee to start considering what to do with properties that end up empty due to flood property buy-outs. Those properties will require some amount of maintenance (such as mowing) and leasing the properties to citizens might be the most cost efficient way for the city to handle them. Council unanimously (with Councilor Randy Parrow not in attendance) approved pursuing the possibility of leasing these properties.

After recessing to an executive session to discuss real estate, council came out of session and announced they have an agreement with Jim Smejkal to hold his Knott St. property for five months in return for \$15,000. This will allow time for an appraisal of the property and for the city to find funding to purchase that property for city uses.

The next Vernonia City Council meeting will be June 15 starting at 7:00 p.m. at City Hall.

USMS decision sends \$1+ million to Multnomah Co.

Fourteen employees of the Columbia County Sheriff's Office have received notice that they will be laid off, effective August 1, because of the loss of more than \$1 million in anticipated revenue from jail bed boarding fees.

A decision by the U.S. Marshals Service (USMS) in Portland to divert a large portion of the current bed usage in Columbia County to Multnomah County means that Columbia County Sheriff Jeff Dickerson must deal with a \$1.2 million dollar shortfall in expected revenue.

"The combination of a 17 percent cut in general fund spending from last year and the anticipated reduction in federal prisoners' boarding fees spells disaster for our Enforcement Division," Sheriff Dickerson said. The 17 percent, he explained, is the total of a four percent cut in the current fiscal

year and a 13 percent reduction for the 2009-10 fiscal year.

The 14 positions include four in the jail and ten on the road and river. They include the county Marine Patrol, a school resource officer, and a contract position with the state fish and wildlife department for law enforcement services on Sauvie Island. Three part-time positions will also be eliminated.

Corrections deputies will have to cover for the loss of the technicians who run the jail control room, but the remaining deputies left to patrol the county will not be able to handle all calls.

"We will be forced to prioritize our responses. Only the most serious of crimes will generally be investigated. Our ability to respond to emergencies as they happen has been fatally compromised," Dickerson said.

After the Sheriff's Office was

given a significantly lower budget than what was approved last year, the sheriff hoped to avoid layoffs on a forecast of \$1.8 million in federal jail boarding fees, after securing a 20% increase in those fees. The Sheriff said the jail will bring in approximately \$1.5 million from boarding fees in the current fiscal year, so next year's boarding fees were looked to as a salve for the department's funding wounds. Unfortunately, a reduction in federal arrests, moving federal detainees to other facilities around the country more quickly, and the USMS agreement to increase the number of federal detainees to Multnomah County, that option has been eliminated.

"We housed about 60 federal detainees per day in the last year," Dickerson said. "I have been assured by a representa-

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• Seniors (60 & over)	\$15
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• Adult	\$7
• Youth (7-17)	\$4
• Seniors (60 & over)	\$4
<i>Seniors are free on Wednesday</i>	
Season Parking Pass	
<i>Saves \$2 from price on site</i>	
• Season (5 day parking)	\$8
Advance Carnival Pass	
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• One day, you choose the day	\$20

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July 15-19, 2009