

City insurance company working on settlement for a false arrest

Vernonia City Council held an improper executive session at their March 15 meeting. Oregon law allows councils to meet out of the public eye for a very restricted handful of reasons, on the basis that most of a council's work should be done in public. The council's stated reason for this session was to consult with counsel concerning legal rights and duties regarding current litigation or litigation likely to be filed. The operative part is that the city's attorney must be present for this type of closed session.

Instead of discussion with their attorney, council was given information by Chief of Police Frank Grace about a tort claim notice filed against the city for unlawful arrest in August of 2009. Grace did not use the name of the person filing the notice, but *The Independent* has obtained public

records of a tort claim notice filed by Garry Kinney for an incident that occurred August 22, 2009.

Kinney's notice to the city stated that the Vernonia Police Department improperly and illegally detained him without probable cause, assaulted and battered him and illegally searched him and his property. The officers reputed to have been involved were Officer Jeff Dalrymple and Officer Michael Kay. Grace told council that, "the arrest was made based on information available at the time," but the District Attorney has refused to prosecute. He went on to say, "Vernonia Police Department was at fault, it was not a good arrest. Our officers are well trained but mistakes happen." Council was told that the city's insurance company is working with the plaintiff's attorney to arrive at a

settlement.

A notice of tort claim is required by Oregon law to be filed prior to any lawsuit against a public agency or public body.

Though newspapers do not report on properly held executive sessions, the Oregon Attorney General's public meetings manual states, "A news reporter has a clear right to disclose any matter covered in an executive session that is not properly within the scope of the announced statutory authorization of the executive session."

Council took no action as a result of this session when they came back to the public meeting.

Other business at this council meeting included a public hearing to close out a 2008-09 Community Development Block Grant that was administered by Community Action Team. The grant served 648 Columbia County households with hous-

ing education or counseling services.

Mayor Sally Harrison appointed, with council consensus, Tim Bero to the Airport Committee, and Marilyn Nicks and Gary Taylor to the Budget Committee. The first meeting of the Budget Committee is scheduled for April 6, 7:00 p.m., at the Vernonia Community Learning Center. The public is welcome to attend, though no public input will be taken until a public hearing on April 13, at 7:00 p.m. in the same location.

The Vernonia Ridge Riders asked for and received council approval for their project to cover the horse arena at Anderson Park. The Ridge Riders will seek grant funds for the cover.

City Administrator Bob Young gave council an update on another pending lawsuit against the city, regarding the issue of sewer backup at the residence of Dennis Weller. Young told council that this problem has been turned over to the attorneys and, hopefully more will be known by next month.

Young also told council that Ginger Westlake has been hired by the city as a full-time Billing Specialist/Receptionist. This position had been filled by part-time employees until two weeks ago, when Westlake was hired.

The next city council meeting is scheduled for 7:00 p.m., on April 5, at City Hall.

Sen. Merkley schedules town halls

U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR) will hold town halls in Clatsop, Lincoln and Tillamook Counties next week.

He will update constituents on his work in Washington, D.C., answer their questions and invite their suggestions about how to tackle the challenges facing Oregon and America.

"Advocating for Oregonians is my number one responsibility," Merkley said. "I invite all residents of Clatsop, Lincoln and Tillamook Counties to meet me and discuss what we need to do to get Oregon work-

ing again and strengthen America."

In 2008, Merkley pledged to hold town halls in each of Oregon's 36 counties every year. He upheld his pledge in 2009 and is quickly advancing it in 2010. Clatsop, Lincoln and Tillamook Counties will be his eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth town halls of the year.

The Clatsop County town hall will be Saturday, March 20, at 2:00 p.m. at Seaside High School cafeteria, 1901 North Holladay Drive, Seaside.

For other counties, go to <http://www.merkley.senate.gov/>

Decrease in number of county jobless

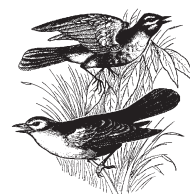
Columbia County's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 12.2 percent in January, a significant decrease from the previous month (13.4%) but higher than the year before (10.3%). The rate was above the statewide rate (10.7%) and the national rate (9.7%). Total employment dropped by 97 to 21,094 and the number of unemployed people rose by 195 to 3,333. Total employment this January was 679 fewer than one year before and there were 501 more people unemployed this year.

OFRI seeks members

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retel at the Oregon Department of Forestry, 2600 State St., Salem, OR 97310 or by e-mail at dpostrel@odf.state.or.us. Completed applications for the current board opening must be postmarked by March 31, 2010.

To learn more about OFRI and its work, visit OFRI online at oregonforests.org.



Spring
Begins
March
20th

Census Bureau mails most forms

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renter status. The Census Bureau Web site says that mailed forms will be delivered to residences in March; to avoid a visit from a census worker, individuals are asked to answer the 10 questions and mail the form back in the provided postage-paid envelope.

Verify the Census worker's legitimacy. If a U.S. Census worker knocks at the door, ask to see their official government badge before answering any questions. According to the Census Web site, Census workers will never ask to enter a home. If unsure about their

identity, contact the Regional Census Center in Seattle to confirm they are employed by the Census Bureau.

Protect personal information. Census workers will not ask for Social Security numbers, health insurance information, passwords, credit card or bank account numbers, or other financial information.

Don't give any money. Census workers will never solicit donations or charge fees.

For more U.S. Census information visit www.2010.census.gov. For additional advice on avoiding identity theft and fraud, visit www.bbb.org

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