

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

How to balance the budget

The Vernonia Budget Committee met last night, June 2, in another effort to cut the budget, by a remaining \$140,000 shortfall. At a previous meeting, May 24, Budget Committee Chairperson Josette Mitchell told the committee that the budget presented had over-estimated revenues by \$400,000, an amount that would have to be cut from non-enterprise funds. Enterprise funds are those that pay for themselves (such as water and sewer) and do not depend on General Funds (which come primarily from property taxes). That meant that \$400,000 would have to be cut from Parks, Library, Police and Administration.

Between May 26 and last night, Mitchell met with each department or committee to discuss possible cuts. The bare bones Library budget slashed their already meager \$81,000 budget (about 7% of the General Fund) by \$4,610, reducing it to \$76,410, which the committee tentatively approved. This will allow the library to continue with the staff intact and no reductions in hours or days of service.

Similarly, the Parks Committee cut their budget by just over \$13,000. Police are working on additional cuts, too.

At that point in last night's meeting, Mitchell read a statement on General Fund expenditures, recommending that the position of City Administrator not be funded. She added that the budget committee has asked at each meeting (there have been at least five) for City Administrator Bob Young to correct errors in the Budget Message. Problems cited with the Budget Message include a statement that \$100,000 would be taken out of Water and Sewer Funds to pay for the Bike Skills Park (the committee nixed that the very first night), another statement that the budget is balanced and has more money than last year (in fact the budget was off by the \$400,000 mentioned earlier and revenues are realistically expected to stay flat, not increase), plus other comparatively minor errors. Young has yet to correct or amend the Budget Message; he was not at last night's meeting.

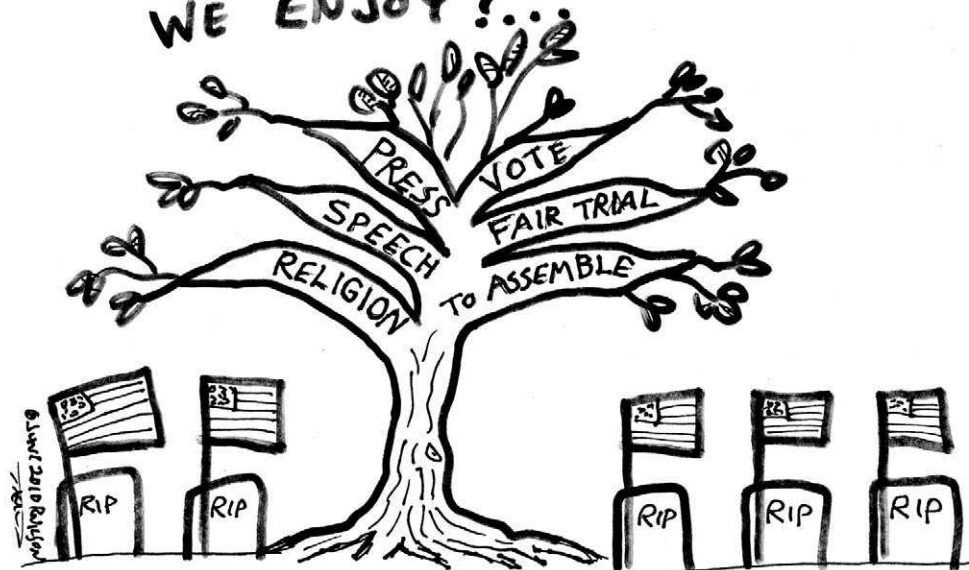
Members of the Budget Committee used terms such as "incompetent" and "not doing the job" in reference to Young. If the position is not funded, they suggested using a part-time contract administrator to fill in.

Additionally, Mitchell suggested not re-funding the part-time police chief position. With other cuts, not funding those two positions would leave the city \$80,000 in the hole, not \$400,000, an amount that could be handled as time goes on, by keeping a tight rein on spending.

The committee's recommendation goes to Council on June 7 to see if they are open to that idea or whether another way of reducing the remaining \$140,000 shortfall can be found.

The next meeting will be June 8, at 7:00 p.m., in the Vernonia Community Learning Center. Public input will be accepted.

How Did We Earn The RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS WE ENJOY?



... THE VETERAN
GAVE THEM TO US.
REMEMBERING THE VET
EVERYDAY!!!

Ike Says . . .

By Dale Webb, member
Nehalem Valley Chapter, Izaak Walton League



This year's Cutthroat trout fishery was a bit slower than past years. My reliable source noted that, between the two of them, they boated 75 fish. Also, the trout were smaller in length, with the longest pushing 14 inches. The river this year was higher than normal and

had quite a bit of color from the overnight rain before the opener. Of course there was rain during the day to dampen the fishermen's spirits also! I wonder if last summer's record stream temperatures didn't also play into the downturn, especially on the larger trout. I would imagine that larger fish might suffer more stress and deaths due to the lack of oxygen in the water when the temperatures reached 85 degrees. Regardless, the fishery is still intact and it looks like the river will stay high enough for a few more boating trips. Remember the limit is only two fish over 8 inches per day.

Coyotes seem to be invading Vernonia! Up in my area there have been two coyotes seen roaming the streets during daylight hours, and there was the run-in my daughter had with probably the same two dogs, during the night at my house. Nobody got hurt, but these coyotes didn't seem to scared of her or her lab. Another coyote

was run over on Knott Street recently. So watch your pets, these coyotes are most likely looking for easy meals to feed to their pups somewhere in a den.

If you have been following news out of Eastern Oregon, you know the wolves have been active also, unfortunately they are killing livestock. The latest news I saw was that ODF&W issued kill permits to the affected landowners. Frankly, while this may keep the landowners from feeling so helpless, they probably will not be effective in stopping the predation problem. Usually it takes aerial gunning by Wildlife Services to remove the problem animals. This is going to be an ongoing conflict in Oregon because the wolves simply do not have the large wilderness areas, like those in Idaho, which help insulate wolves from humans and livestock.

Start watching out for Does and fawns on the highways. By the time you read this article many fawns will have been born and, soon after, will be following their mothers. I don't know why, but when the weather turns warmer the Does seem to want to go to the river and, with Hwy. 47 paralleling the Nehalem, this makes for a bad situation. Please slow down and keep an eye out for deer crossing, or standing alongside the road, it may save your life.

ODF&W raised many of their fees this year and many sportspeople have protested. Interestingly, ODF&W had fewer controlled hunt applications this year but, since they doubled the fee, they still came out ahead. Many sportspeople

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