VHS graduate Katy Stevens talks with Sen. Merkley after town hall in the high school gymnasium.

Varied questions for Sen. Merkley at Vernonia town hall

Oregon Senator Jeff Merkley held a town hall in Vernonia on June 6, from 5:00 to 6:00 p.m. at the Vernonia High School gymnasium. Between 40 and 50 people made up the audience, a pretty good turn-out for a Sunday evening meeting.

After being introduced by County Commissioner Tony Hyde, Merkley took questions, by lottery. The first person asked about the complexity of the system, and the screening process required to get public assistance, and whether the people who need help are able to get it. Merkley responded that the process was laborious in an effort to be sure that public funds are used appropriately, also that he has a staff person who can help advocate in those situations.

The next questioner asked "What are the benchmarks in Afghanistan and the final goals, and who provides accountability to get there?" Answer: "It appears to me we have not nailed down our mission clearly…We need to have a very clear mission."

Other questions dealt with the U.S. national debt, the BP oil spill, returning jobs to America, student loans, limiting legislature's behavior during emergencies, credit card and consumer protections, and accountability of agencies that represent us.

High school graduate Katy Stevens asked "What steps can be taken to secure funds for Vernonia so teachers don't get laid off and days cut?" Merkley responded that, "Countries do the best job at educating their children who have the strongest economies." He went on to say that the legislature is debating further use of federal funds for schools. A third of the stimulus bill went to states, and Oregon received the equivalent of a month's worth of school out of that, Merkley told Stevens.

Senator Merkley holds a town hall in each county yearly.

New Wauna branch building will be LEED certified

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right for us to step up and demonstrate our commitment, not only to our members and the communities we serve, but also to our environment", said Robert Blumberg, WFCU President/CEO.

Debi Smiley, WFCU Executive Vice President and COO, reinforced the importance of 'green' as part of the branch construction. "The selection of our general contractor and subcontractors has included a review of their organizations' green practices. The reach of the green factor extends well beyond just our footprint in the ground."

In addition to the new green branch, the Credit Union offers a growing selection of green products, including loans, checking accounts and online services. "The new branch will also offer drive-up service, including a 24-hour ATM, plus lobby service for members to apply for new accounts, loans and other products and services", said Christie Kiggins, who will serve as branch manager for both the new Scappoose Branch and the St. Helens Branch.

Local residents will notice the first stages of construction in June with the installation of a large message sign on the property. The sign will initially provide a few brief messages, and will add time and temperature once the branch construction nears completion.

Plenty of fanfare and activities are being planned to introduce Wauna Federal Credit Union into the community of Scappoose. This will include a groundbreaking ceremony, activities for local dignitaries, and a huge grand opening for the community.

Wauna Federal Credit Union is headquartered in Clatskanie, and serves over 13,600 members. Branches are located in Astoria, Clatskanie, St Helens, Vernonia and Warrenton. Everyone in Clatsop or Columbia Counties is eligible for membership with WFCU. For more information call toll-free 800.773.3236, or visit our website at waunafcu.org.

Harrison, Hudson quibble over meetings with court

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1, and a full time police department composed of two sergeants and one officer.

As Council went on to other business, Harrison gave a report on the proposal to change from Justice Court to Municipal Court. A memo on the issue, prepared by Young, was handed out to council, but no one had a chance to review it before this meeting. Harrison said she has had two meetings with the county on this issue and "there are services" the Justice Court hasn't provided. Later, Harrison said she objected to the process that was followed with the court (without further explanation), and the county's handling of the matter.

Councilor Kevin Hudson said there had been a number of meetings with the court and Harrison said, "No, there's been one." Hudson replied, "No, I was told there were a number of meetings." Harrison responded, "No." That ended the discussion and no decision was made or motion presented.

In other business, council;

- approved $3,000 for removal of danger trees in Anderson Park.
- was told that the Hillsboro Argus Courier will no longer be delivered to Vernonia as of July 1.
- discussed recent cougar sitings and asked for an article in the paper (see article in this issue).
- renewed the contract with Metereaders, LLC, for water meter reading.
- unanimously approved Ordinance 867 regarding city business licensing.
- unanimously approved Ordinance 868 on public park procedures.
- approved resolution 14-08 setting fees, including raising the park day use fee for nonresidents to $5.00 and the bulk water rate to $1.00/50 gallons.

The next city council meeting will include the final budget hearing and adoption of the 2010-2011 budget and will be held June 21, starting at 7:00 p.m., at City Hall.