

# The INDEPENDENT

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## Opinion

### Vernonia budget balanced

The Vernonia Budget Committee did this community a favor and deserves our thanks for wrestling the city budget to the point of being balanced. They did not have an easy job and they did the hard work that should have been in place for the past two or more years, and some of the members even agreed to serve on an ad hoc Blue Ribbon Committee to look at the money coming in and going out every month, to keep the finances under control so the whole process will be easier next year. Thank you, committee members.

### Police Chief takes control

After a couple of Vernonia Council meetings on court issues, Police Chief Grace quietly took control, on June 21, by handing out a memo on Municipal vs. Justice Court that said his opinion is that the Justice Court offers a level of service that is affordable. Another memo outlined new protocols for routing traffic citations that said as of June 17 all code violations/infractions will be routed to the Vernonia Justice Court. Hopefully, these memos will usher in better a better relationship between the Vernonia police and the court. Thanks, Chief Grace.

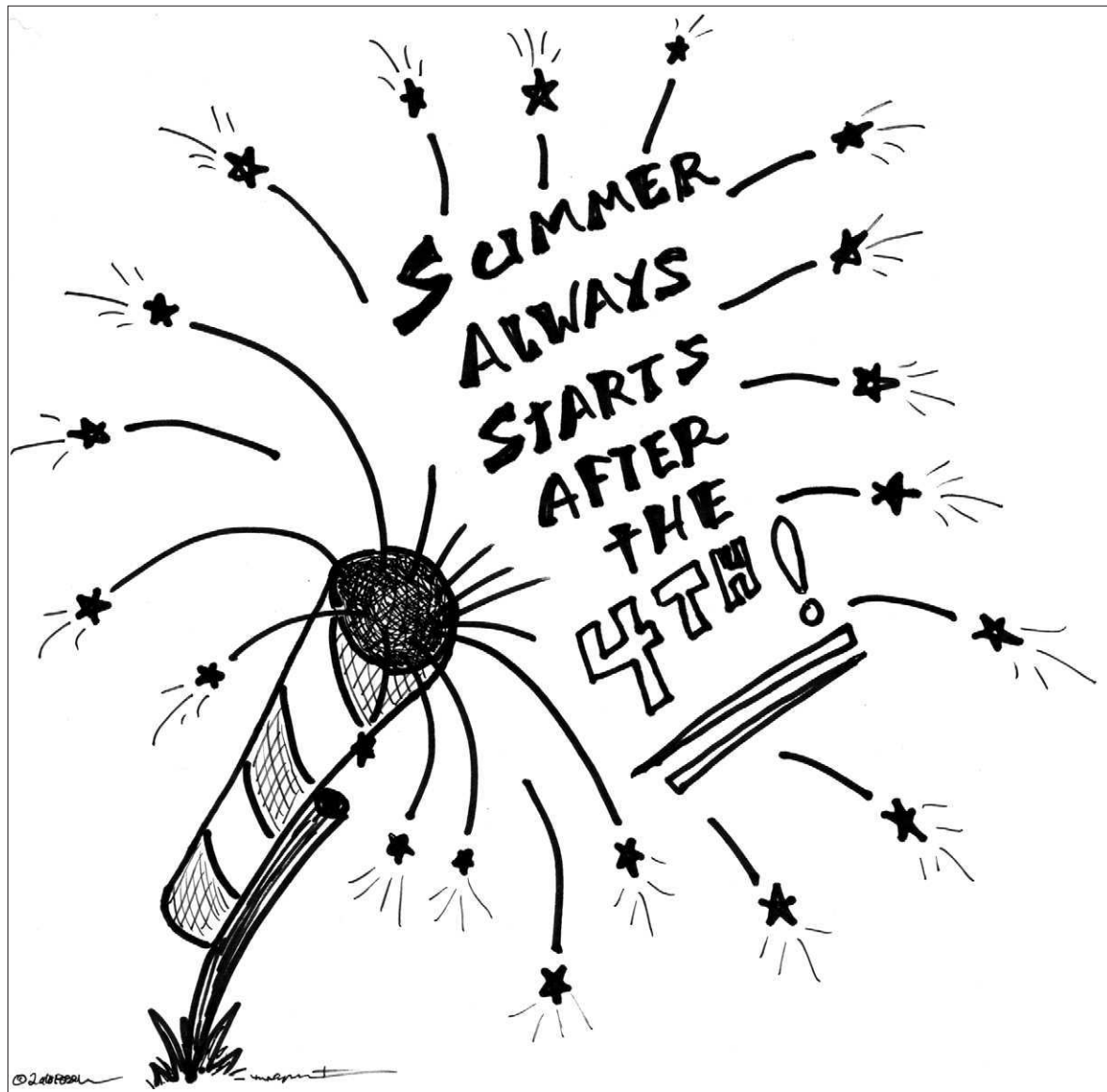
### That 4:00 a.m. phone call

Last Monday, Vernonia residents were awakened by a recorded phone call shortly before 4:00 a.m. After shaking the cobwebs from sleepy brains, most of us realized that, far from being an annoying robo-call, the 9-1-1 emergency communications system had been activated because a child was missing from his bed.

The call provided a description of what the child was wearing, the area where his home was located, and information that he may have been sleep-walking. We were asked to check for him around our homes and yards, and many citizens ignored the early hour to become part of the search effort. The child was home safe about three hours later.

The outcome of this emergency was good, not just because the child was safe, but because it illustrated the premise that emergency situations can be handled best when there is adequate communication with citizens. All those involved in developing this system – Columbia 9-1-1, law enforcement, fire districts, municipalities and county agencies – deserve our thanks.

As for those who grumbled about being disturbed and hung up their phones, think again. You may sometime need emergency information about a flood or fire or wind storm or, God forbid, a missing person in your family.



### Ike Says . . .

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



We just finished one of the wettest springs on record here in the Northwest and, yep, just like everybody else I was getting tired of it. Weather that falls outside of average has pluses and minuses when it comes to wildlife. We are likely to be seeing those effects later

this year, or in years to come.

The effects on fish are most likely to be positive. It seems to make sense that creatures that live in water would be enhanced when there is more of it, but this year, while we had more water we didn't have a lot of high water, which is good. High water events tend to be hard on spawning beds and young fry. Juvenile fish seek shelter from high flows and often become trapped in isolated pockets of water when the high flows recede. The trapped fish die when the pockets dry up or when predators find them. Since there were no damaging high flow events this year, that is a point in the plus column.

We have also experienced record high river flows this spring. Since mid-April we have been above the daily mean for stream flow, in many instances twice the mean flow. In June we have been setting new daily high stream flow records for the date. Truly, we are witnessing a very in-

teresting phenomenon, the likes we have never seen before. I would guess that higher flows in the spring will be very beneficial to out-migrating smolts due to faster down stream transport, deeper river depths and higher sediment loads (east fork of Nehalem pumping in mud) which, while higher than usual, were not harmful. These conditions should have created the best out-migration and the least predation, compared to previous years. One caveat, though: Last summer the Nehalem suffered the highest river temperatures since temperatures have been monitored, which surely killed a lot of fish. So how will we know if this spring high water made a difference? I suspect that, since Coho and Steelhead juveniles took a beating in last year's heat, this year's smolt production for Coho and Steelhead will be down. Chinook salmon smolt out the same year that they are born, unlike Coho and Steelhead, so they should see a marked benefit. So what we could see is a bad 2011 Coho run (due to a major summer kill in 2009), the Steelhead run will be lower in 2012, but not as badly impacted as Coho, due to mixed return timing. The Chinook run in 2013 should show improvement over the weak runs of the past couple of years. Of course all of these predictions are out the window if ocean conditions turn bad.

On the wildlife side of the coin we have a mixed bag. Birds most likely will take a real drubbing from all this wet weather. I expect forest grouse, turkey and chukar populations to be

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