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THE INDEPENDENT

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The Voice of the Upper Nehalem River Valley for Over 25 years

July 20, 2011



Jugglemania! came to the Vernonia Public Library, on July 13, as part of the library's Summer Reading Program. This program was enjoyed by all who attended. Jugglemania! was paid for by the Oregon College Savings Plan. See page 7 for more activities scheduled as part of the Summer Reading Program.

Scappoose-Vernonia Rd. is now closed

Scappoose-Vernonia Road closed July 18 for road re-construction work at the slide location near the summit. The complexity of the re-construction work, in combination with environmental protection measures, requires a complete road closure to general traffic at the project site. The road is set to re-open July 30. Road closure barricades are at locations approximately 1/4 mile each side of the project site. An alternate east-west route is Apiary Rd.-Meissner Rd.-Canaan Rd.

Constructing a detour at the project site was determined to be not feasible, given the environmental protection constraints at the project site, plus the limited amount of funding for re-constructing the damaged roadway. The roadway was damaged when an aging subsurface culvert broke, al-

lowing water to undermine the roadbed.

The objective for this project is completion of the repair work in as short a time period as possible to get the road back in service for both car and truck

traffic, according to Glen Crinklaw, Assistant Public Works Director. The roadway at the slide location has been weight limited to car traffic only since the slide became active with last Winter's heavy rain.

Columbia County offices closed every Friday due to budget woes

As of last Friday, July 15, and continuing every Friday, through June 30, 2012, the Columbia County Courthouse, including Animal Control and the Justice Court, will be closed to the public. The closure is due to the County's budget situation; the Board of County Commissioners approved the Friday closures as a part of the FY 2011/12 budget process.

The public will not be able to conduct county business on Fridays, however there will

continue to be limited access to the Courthouse for State Court Services between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

Anyone needing information regarding County operating hours or whether certain departments are open may call the County information number at 503-397-7210. Also, information regarding departmental numbers or other Courthouse information can be found at the County website, <http://www.columbia.or.us>.

Recall election underway for two Vernonia city councilors

The election to recall Vernonia City Councilors Willow Burch and Marilyn Nicks is underway, with ballots mailed to voters on Monday, July 18. Ballots must be returned by 8:00 p.m. on August 4 to be counted. The Vernonia Public Library will remain open on August 4 until 8:00 p.m. to accept ballots.

Burch and Nicks had until July 12 to decide whether to resign or to turn in a Statement of Justification explaining why they should not be recalled. Both chose to submit the justification, triggering the election. The City of Vernonia will be required to repay the county for the cost of the election.

The July 6 issue of *The Independent* gave details of the reasons for the recall, as outlined by chief petitioner Sharon Bernal.

The reasons given in Burch and Nicks' justifications along with questions and answers from *The Independent's* interviews with Burch, Nicks and Bernal are given below.

The justification letter from Burch made this statement: "During my term on City Council, I have seen way too much dysfunction. In my view Bill Haack's lack of experience and unauthorized actions have cost the City considerable money it does not have.

"In my opinion, Sharon

Bernal and her group have caused upheaval in Vernonia by not verifying facts before calling in news crews from Portland and rallying citizens with irresponsible statements based on half-truths.

"I have continually been denied the most basic briefings on City business. The City is now in danger of being sued, with a tort claim already filled due to Mr. Haack's actions. Through no actions of my own, I now find myself threatened with lawsuits in Federal court.

"If I am guilty of anything it is inexperience in dealing with such deep-seated dishonesty and unbelievable bullying.

"I have always tried to do my best for The City of Vernonia. My intentions are only to protect the citizens of Vernonia. My goal is to get back on track putting this city on its feet again.

"I strongly urge you to please vote NO to the recall and I will do everything in my power to continue insisting on transparency in our government."

1. What were Haack's unauthorized actions?

Burch – Hiring a personnel attorney to represent the city without informing council of the need. Then initiating an investigation without council approval and spending money for it with-

See Recall on page 5

Fire Season started on July 11

The 2011 Fire Season has been officially declared for Northwest Oregon beginning July 11. The fire season designation includes lands protected by the Department of Forestry within Columbia, Clatsop, Multnomah, Washington, Tillamook and Yamhill counties.

Forest operators must now have the required fire equipment at the site of their operation. Forest operators must also provide a fire watch on

each operation after equipment is shut down for the day.

Fire season rules prohibit smoking while in or traveling through any "operation area", and prohibit the use of fuse and caps for blasting on forest land. Regulated Use Zones NW-1, NW-2, NW-3 start out under Industrial Fire Precaution Level I (IFPL I).

The declaration of fire season also means that backyard

See Fire on page 4