



PRESORTED STANDARD
U.S. Postage Paid
Vernonia, OR 97064
Permit No. 37

FREE

THE INDEPENDENT

Vol. 26, No. 22

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

November 16, 2011



On Saturday, November 12, the Freewheelers Club of Vernonia cut wood donated by Dustin Thompson of St. Helens. They gave most of the wood to senior citizens in the area and are raffling off a trailer load as part of their effort to adopt a family for Christmas. The club was started by Joe Hammond in honor of his friend Erik Kesterson, a soldier killed in Iraq, who went to school in Vernonia. The club honors Kesterson's memory by doing good works, such as picking up litter in town and on the highway, and finding ways to help those in need. See more pictures on page 20. Photo by Sunny Suppes.

Vernonia School District continues funding quest

by Dr. Ken Cox, Vernonia School Superintendent

The [Vernonia School] District recently went to the Vernonia Planning Commission asking for an adjustment to our Conditional Use Permit for the new school. We asked them to allow us to run the utilities, from Bridge Street along Missouri to the new school, overhead, as they are now, rather than underground. Based on the information we had at the time we made the presentation we felt it was a reasonable request, and it would also save the District an estimated \$87,000.

The Planning Commission unanimously approved our request and we are moving forward with the project right on schedule. However, some of the concerns that were expressed seemed to have an underlying question: Where are we with our financing of the new school? I would like to answer that question and briefly recap our financial journey to date.

When we started this journey we had BOORA Architects help us design a school that met all of our needs because

many felt that we only had this one shot at new schools for our community. They came up with a \$48 million design. Two years ago we successfully passed a bond for \$13 million and we were able to sell them at a premium and get \$13.6 million in return, while keeping the cost to taxpayers almost 10 percent lower than the original tax rate estimate. Thank you for your down payment on our new schools!

We were then faced with a very large gap, which we immediately addressed by consolidating the design and bringing the project estimate down. Today we are looking at a budget of over \$39 million. It was about this time that the District contracted with the Metropolitan Group of Portland to act as our fundraising counsel and laid out an aggressive, four-year fundraising strategy based on reaching out to foundations, corporations, state

See School on page 3

Former officer says he will sue city

The attorney for former Vernonia police officer Michael Kay sent a letter to the City of Vernonia notifying them of Kay's intent to sue the city for "high six figures,"

The four page Notice of Tort Claim letter from Attorney Michelle R. Burrows, dated November 4, 2011, starts with the general reasons of actions, "resulting in his (Kay's) unlawful and unconstitutional termination from employment." Burrows goes on to say they intend to name the City of Vernonia for the actions of Mr. Bill Haack, former Chief Grace, Chief Connor (sic), Justice of the Peace Wally Thompson, Kathy Peck, Dian Rubanoff, Mayor Sally Harrison, and Officer Carnahan. "Because the City has edited, destroyed and refused to provide extensive documentation there are likely other acts and actor (sic), including City Council members, who will be implicated as discovery proceeds," the letter continues.

The letter also states, "We

were unaware of the degree of falsification, manipulation, perjury and outright lying the various individuals engaged in to perfect the termination of Officer Kay until Kay was terminated."

Burrows asserts that, "The DPSST investigation of Mike Kay involved a somewhat absurd claims (sic) he "falsified" K-9 accreditation, stole money and falsified public records on the retention, training and experience of his K-9 officer," but then goes on to say, "The DPSST dog certification issue is primarily for DPSST to sort out." DPSST has already notified Kay of their intent to revoke his certification, for life, to be a police officer. Kay is currently waiting for his final round of appeals with DPSST on that issue.

Though the letter refers to Haack as "the primary bad actor in all of this," it goes on to say, "others followed or contributed to the enormous and often breathtaking effort to discredit a man who likely saved

lives (emphasis added)."

"We will be seeking all back pay, front pay, emotional damages for loss of an entire career. I expect our prayer to be in the high six figures together with our attorney fees," the letter asserts. Burrows added that the lawsuit will be filed in federal court, before the arbitration is scheduled. The arbitration referred to is arbitration requested by the police union for a date not yet set.

Consideration and response to the potential lawsuit will be determined by the city attorney and the city's insurance company.

New Spencer Park Town Hall

The Vernonia School District will hold a Community Town Hall on plans for New Spencer Park, on December 6, starting at 7:00 p.m. in the green building. Park design information will be presented by the district's architectural firm.

Vernonia Thanksgiving Dinner

A Community Thanksgiving Dinner will be held at the Vernonia Community Church gym on Thursday, November 24, from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Turkey or ham will be on the menu at this free dinner. Everyone is invited to the dinner, which is sponsored by the Pioneer Baptist Fellowship and the Vernonia Community church.

To donate or volunteer to help at the dinner, call Cathy at 503-429-8033 or Dennis at 503-429-0335.

Vernonia Christmas Events

Washington Grade School Winter Concert will be December 1 at 7:00 p.m., in the gymnasium.

The presentation will include the 5th grade beginning band, and the elementary students holiday musical.

Vernonia Christmas in the Country Bazaar will be held at the Vernonia Middle School (green building) on December 3 and 4. Hours are Saturday 10 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday Noon to 5:00 p.m.

The bazaar is a fundraiser for the Vernonia Boosters scholarship fund.