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The new Vernonia school building continues to take shape. This picture, taken January 31, of the front entrance shows many of the windows in place and FSC cedar siding. The FSC designation assures that the wood was responsibly harvested from well-managed verified sources. For more information on the new school and funding, see article on page 12 by Superintendent Dr. Ken Cox.

Town Hall on preparedness

The City of Vernonia held a hurriedly scheduled Storm Watch 2012 Preparedness community town hall on Saturday, January 28, at the Vernonia Middle School. The town hall was set up as a result of the recent snow storm, with electricity loss, and was based on expectations of very wet weather for the rest of this winter.

Though only 15-20 community members attended the town hall, West Oregon Electric Cooperation (WOEC) General Manager Marc Farmer started the presentations (see Power of the People on page 13 for that information).

Vernonia Mayor Josette Mitchell explained the reasons the city had declared an emergency during the storm. That declaration is done in order to start mobilization of county resources in case the needs of the event outstrip the city's available funds. It sets the stage for county, and possibly state or federal (depending on the level of needs and costs) agencies to be able to help. In the case of this last storm, outside resources (other than WOEC's need for outside crews) were not needed. The declaration does not mean that shelters will necessarily be set up, just that the city is trying to be ready for whatever needs may arise.

Recognizing that citizens need for a way for citizens to find out what's going on, and what resources are available depending on the situation, the city is setting up a Facebook page for information, in addition to the city website.

The two buildings designated as shelters are St. Mary's

Catholic Church and the old Lincoln Grade School building. Community members can go to one of those two locations for information if they don't have phone service. If they do have phone service, call the Vernonia Police Department non-emergency numbers, where information will be recorded. Those numbers are 503-397-1521 or 1-800-696-7795.

The city's Emergency Committee, in conjunction with the Vernonia Rural Fire Protection District has put together a survey to find out which community members may be vulnerable in different scenarios (such as flood, earthquake, power outage, etc.). It is available at city hall and will be mailed out with the next water bill.

The need for all community members to be able to "shelter in place" for the first 48-72 hours of any emergency was stressed. Each home needs to have food, a heat source, and water for up to three days. Information on what should be in the 72-hour kit can be found at http://72hours.org/build_kit.html and other online sites.

Another suggestion was for each household to have signs to put in a front window, one saying "HELP" and the other "OKAY" so that neighbors and friends can see right away who needs help and who's doing fine.

The city will continue working on refining emergency procedures and getting more citizens involved in emergency response and more information to the community.

More emergency preparedness information is on page 8.

Early results give Bonamici the lead



Suzanne Bonamici

Based on results available early last night, Suzanne Bonamici is leading for the 1st District Congressional seat with 54.24% of the statewide vote, which included 49.89% percent of the Columbia County votes and 52.95% of Washington County votes. The win-

ner will take the seat vacated by David Wu's resignation in 2011.

Voter turnout for the January 31 special election was 45.40% in Columbia County, 38.86% in Washington County and 40.01% statewide as of 9:00 p.m. election night.



Western Pond Turtle is one of two turtle species native to Oregon that will be covered in a free presentation. See page 20 for more information.

U.S. Senator Wyden Town Hall

U.S. Senator Ron Wyden will hold a Town Hall meeting in Scappoose on February 5, at 12:30 p.m., at Scappoose City Hall, 33568 E. Columbia Ave.

Senator Wyden has been holding town hall meetings in every county, every year since 1996.

Feb. 10 will be a school day

Friday, February 10, will be a school day with a regular Friday schedule for Vernonia students. The day will make up for one of the days lost recently to snow.

Band Concert Cancelled

The January 24 Vernonia band concert was cancelled, at the last minute, due to the loss of school days from weather during the previous week. It has not yet been rescheduled.