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# THE INDEPENDENT

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*The Voice of the Upper Nehalem River Valley for Over 27 years*

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The Beamish family walks in the Vernonia St. Patrick's Day parade where, as usual, much candy was thrown. This year the weather cooperated for just enough time to finish.

## Vernonia schools demolition date set

The Vernonia School District Board of Directors held their regularly scheduled meeting on March 8, then held an extra meeting on March 15 to take care of items related to the new school and demolition of the old schools.

At the March 15 special meeting, Superintendent Dr. Ken Cox told the board that demolition on the old schools will start July 5, though Hazmat work will begin inside Washington Grade School and the high school on July 2. By July 16, everything is expected to be moved off the old site and moved into the new school. Fencing at the old site during demolition will allow for the grassy area and fields to be used during Jamboree. Moving the items inside the old schools to the new school will start June 12 and the old district office is expected to close on June 28 and open at the new site on July 2. The demolition is expected to be completed by September 1. The district is in the process of preparing a Request for Proposal in order to select and hire a demolition/deconstruction contractor.

Also on March 15, the board approved:

- A supplemental budget needed to appropriate and use the additional funds coming from a construction loan and

grants/donations, all for the new school.

- Declared the donated modular (the one beside Washington Grade School) as surplus as they prepare to sell it to some school district that might need it.

- A new Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with the City of Vernonia that puts the school district in charge of demolition, rather than the city.

The March 8 board meeting dealt with regular items such as naming Grove, Mueller and Swank as the district auditor, and renewing the teacher and administrative contracts.

One interesting item pre-

### Spaghetti feed for Roberts

There will be a Spaghetti Feed on Saturday, March 24, from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. at the Vernonia Scout Cabin. This is a fundraiser for Ryan Roberts, a Vernonia man who needs a kidney transplant.

Cost of the meal will be \$7, and all of the money collected will go to Roberts, as everything needed for the feed has been donated. To-go meals are also available. Food by Mario Leonetti.

## Vernonia water rates will increase starting in June

Water rates is a topic that has resulted in many meetings of the Vernonia Public Works Committee and the city council. There have been a series of meetings and work sessions over the last two months to determine what the rates should be, in order to have necessary working funds to make and maintain the water system.

The City of Vernonia brought in Tim Tice from the Oregon Association of Water Utilities (OAWU) to utilize their expertise in what other municipalities do, and to crunch numbers for the city. The first run at the numbers was met with concern by both the council and committee.

After a deeper look, more accurate numbers were provided and a different rate structure was requested of Tice. The structure originally looked at had tiers that allowed user costs to increase incrementally as they used more water. Council and committee preferred a simpler plan, one simi-

lar to the current structure, with a base rate and a consumption rate for water used above the base allowance.

Tice advised that the base rate should cover 60-75 percent of the expenses. The forecast for Fiscal Year 2012-13 is for a water budget of around \$550,000. The consumption rate should then take care of the additional 25-40 percent necessary to fund the budget to 100 percent. Historical data show that city water rates, since 2008, have brought in an average of \$459,409.

The current rate structure has a \$35.00 base, which includes the first 2,000 gallons of water, plus the consumption rate of \$1.25 for each additional 1,000 gallons. Just a reminder – that what many think of as the “water bill” includes water, \$53.00 for sewer, \$2.00 for park maintenance and \$12.00 for an existing sewer loan, so most residential users see a bill of somewhere over

**See Water on page 5**



High water was back last week when the Nehalem River rose to over 11 feet before dropping again. The above picture was taken from Bill Sword's property looking over at the Horse Arena in Anderson Park.