



WEEKLY DEPARTMENTAL UPDATES

SEPTEMBER 19, 2014

ADMINISTRATION / UTILITY BILLING

- This September we sent out 65 shut offs notices out of 885 accounts. Actual shut offs will be on the 22nd of September. Last month we had five shut offs.
- This month we sent 8 water/sewer accounts to collections. Per Organizational Policy, these accounts are sent to Western Collection Bureau for Collection.
- Last August we had 6 new accounts open. This September we had 4 new accounts.
- The Utility Billing Clerk updated 153 Business Licenses and sent them to Becky Magunson (Columbia County Assessor's Office) to be recorded.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

- Between 09/01/2014 and 09/18/2014 at 1pm, the Vernonia Police Department (VPD) responded to 163 calls for service. Included in those service calls were (3) Arrests and (3) Traffic Citations. We currently have several ongoing investigations that will likely lead to more arrests.
- VPD will soon take delivery of two new/used fully equip Chevrolet Tahoe patrol vehicles. We are in the process of finalizing the purchase with the Scappoose Police Department. The vehicles are used but have very low miles. We were able to purchase the vehicle's for \$40,000 for both. This is a substantial savings to the city. The last fully equip patrol vehicle purchased by the City was approx. \$60,000. It is my hopes that we can take delivery of the vehicles within the next three weeks. We will have to do some exterior work to the vehicles prior to putting them in service. (IE: Vernonia Stickers)
- The newest member of the Vernonia Police Department, Eva Leininger, attended a (Law Enforcement Data Systems Training) in Salem the beginning of the month. She has advised me that it was very informative and she learned a lot about LE records security regulation. Although we have been in compliance, Eva is working on tightening everything up a bit more.
- VPD has been adverting for Reserve Police Officers for nearly a month now. As of 09/19/2014 we have received to applications. I am going to accept applications through the end of the month.
- VPD has been working on a rebuild of our webpage for about the last month and is nearing completion. Upon launch, we will offer a variety of online forms that can be filled out from home. Such as, Security Checks, Ride Along Request, Cold

Crime Reporting, and Nuisance Complaints. It is my hopes that the new design will allow for more open communication with the public and provide of a portal to provide the most up to date information.

FINANCE / HUMAN RESOURCES

- We hired a new custodian to replace Shirlee Daughtry. Her name is Sally Vandehey. Sally is a part time worker and she started work on September 11.
- We Ordered security cameras for Public Works to deter theft of fuel and vandalism that has occurred recently. Recently we discovered that gasoline was stolen from our PW trucks at the PW facility. Cost for the cameras was \$500 and will be divided equally among the three funds (Water, Sewer and Street).
- Also we Ordered security cameras for Anderson Park to deter vandalism and vagrancy in the restrooms and covered area. Cost was \$300.
- Finance Administrator Presented USDA funding update to the Public Works Committee / City Council on September 9. The USDA funding was pertaining to the Waste Water Treatment Facility Project to include dikes elevation around the lagoons, installation of new pipe gallery, and the actual mechanical building to house electrical items.
- Finance Administrator completed final prep work for annual audit. Every year an auditing firm (Grove, Muller and Swank) comes to City Hall for about 3 days for a review (audit) of the previous year's organization financial statement /report. This year the auditors will be here September 29th through October 1st.
- Finance Administrator spoke with Evan Haas with DEQ regarding interim financing for the Waste Water Treatment Plant Project (WWTP). The City has DEQ loan funds available on an open loan, but in order to take advantage of a much lower interest rate we will be required to apply for new funding in the amount of 2.8 million. USDA will finance the project once completed in addition to refinancing 2.7 million of our current outstanding DEQ debt. USDA is also providing the City with a grant of 2.8 million for the project. This funding package will allow the City to finish construction of the project without raising sewer rates. The loan application / approval process will take until mid-February to complete. This will not hinder the time line of the project. The City may advertise for bids as soon as the RFP has been approved by USDA, which should occur within the next two weeks. We will have to wait until the interim financing is finalized prior to issuing a notice of award. If this is done by late February we can still meet our projected start date of March 2015.
- Pertaining to interim financing for the Waste Water Treatment Plant Project (WWTP) the Finance Administrator also requested a quote for interim financing from Baird (a commercial lender). The City is evaluating that if Baird can offer competitive rates with the interest rate offered by DEQ it may be in the City's best interest to consider it for the interim financing. A commercial lender will not have the strict requirements that DEQ imposes and the application process is much shorter. Finance Department staff is in the process of comparing both options before making a recommendation.
- The City will be advertising for the Permanent Librarian position (28 hours/week). We will be posting the advertisement on the week of September 22nd. The position will be open to the general public as well as current staff.
- Finance Administrator spoke with Pam Weller (Wauna Credit Union) to finalize loan documents for the two used police vehicles we are purchasing from the City of Scappoose. We should have them by the first part of October.

PUBLIC WORKS

- Jeff Burch (Public Works Superintendent) met with Mark Brown (Vernonia School District) to discuss strategies for the immediate care of the recently seeded fields. The Vernonia School District staff is going to be the lead for the watering of the fields for the immediate future. The City Public Works department is ready to assist in case of need.

- New fire hydrant installed at California Avenue. The Fire Hydrant will be used to irrigate the new athletic facilities (Softball field and soccer field at the new Spencer Park).
- PW staff proceeded with some sewer cleaning and inspection (Sewer Basin A and B) in the west part of town
- PW staff started to install security cameras at PW facilities. Task should be fully completed next week.
- Most of our Public Works vehicles were serviced this week (basic periodical maintenance)
- Five Stars Contractors (the contractor building the new Health Care Center) has requested PW staff assistance in installing fire hydrant on site.

PLANNING / BUILDING

- The Planning Commission had a Public Hearing for a zone change about the Lincoln Grade School. The applicant requested a Zone Change from R (residential) to GC (General Commercial). The Planning Commission Recommendation was to deny such rezone. City Council will have a Public Hearing on October 6, 2014 for a final decision. The base of the rezone request was with the intent of potentially, in the future, develop shops, bed and breakfast and brew pub facilities.
- Because of lack of directional and informational signs along the linear trail to direct bikers and walkers to downtown establishments, the Planning Commission will be review design for potential signs.
- In September (up to date) we have issued (4) Electrical Permits. Also there 11 ongoing electrical inspections: eight (8) approved, two (2) were not approved and one needed some corrections.
- In September (up to date) we have issued five Building Permits. Also six building permits have been approved.

LIBRARY

- September 21, 2014 thru September 27, 2014 is National Banned and Challenged Book Week. The week highlights books that have been banned or challenged thru the ages at libraries. No books have ever been banned or challenged at Vernonia Library. A small display of books is set up during this week to show examples of banned and challenged books to the public.
- September 1, 2014 thru September 15, 2014 the library check out 914 pieces of materials. June 1, 2014 thru September 1, 2014 the library had 41 new library cards issued. The library is happy to welcome all our new patrons.
- Painting of the outside trim of the library building will resume next week, weather is a factor for this delay. Carpets were cleaned during August.
- Our Public Works crew helped with the cutting of shrubs around building. Thank you so much. Members of the Library Board have been responsible in recent years for the upkeep of the library grounds. This has become impractical for some of our board members who can no longer take on all the work that is required. We will need to find other alternatives (volunteer groups/grants/ community groups etc.) to help out with cleaning maintenance of the library building and the grounds in the future.

- The library had a “Movie Night” on September 16, 2014, “Harry and the Hendersons” was showed. A good time was had by all that attend. Another “Movie Night “is planned for September 23, 2014. The movie will be Lee Daniels’ The Butler. If patrons like having a movie night, we could consider scheduling a movie night once a month.
- Staff completed the Oregon’s Annual Public Library Statistical Report has been done as required by the State of Oregon Library Association. Also staff completed the Summer Reading Statistical Report . Summer reading attendance was down this year compared to previous years. Changes are being considered for next year’ summer reading program to better fit the children’s needs in our community.
- Because of the increasing cost of repurchasing and replacing library material (books, tapes, DVD etc.) staff has step up their efforts to recover missing materials and recover fines through phone calls and letters. Unfortunately this means that the library has to use a collection agency for a small percentage of patrons who don’t respond to letters and calls and who have big amounts owed because of the loss of borrowed materials.
Staff always wants to work with patrons to resolve problems first before collections are called.
- As we do every year, we have applied for a “Ready to Read” grant. The Library will be receiving a \$1,000 grant to help with the cost of reading programs at the library. The grant money will arrive in December for use in 2015.
- Oregon Humanities “The Conversation Project”, is a program that our community has enjoyed for years. The Conversation Project offers Oregon nonprofit and community organizations low-cost, humanities-based public discussion programs about provocative issues and ideas. Discussions last sixty to ninety minutes and are led by trained conversation facilitators who connect the subject to participants’ experiences and to the local community, and challenge participants to think in new ways without advocating a particular perspective. Conversation Project leaders frame and lead a discussion among participants. This year there have been some changes to the program. Oregon Humanities will start charging a fee for its programs. Library staff is discussing potential opportunities to fund a couple of programs for the benefit the community.
- No children showed up for chess club on September 18, 2014. This is not unexpected with nice weather and all outdoor activities the kids do.
- After School Reading Program will start September 23, 2014 at 3:45-4:45.
- Book discussion will meet on Monday, September 29, 2014. Currently the book group is reading “ A town like Alice” by Nevil Shute. The group will meet at 5:30 pm.

CITY CLERK / ADMINISTRATION

- The City Clerk registered with the Columbia County Elections Officer the candidates for the upcoming November 4th elections. There will be two (2) Council vacancies and one (1) Mayor vacancy. Running for the Mayor, (this is a two year position), are Mayor Josette Mitchell (Incumbent) and former Mayor Sally Harrison. Also running for four (4) year City Council position, are Jill Hult and Mike Seager.
- City Clerk meet with Scott VanHoff, (FEMA Floodplain Specialist), Dan Brown (Community Action Team), GianPaolo Mammone, Vernonia City Administrator, Carole Connell (Vernonia City Planner), and Mayor, Josette Mitchell for a Community Assistance Visit (CAV). The CAV visit tend to identify potential violations about compliance with FEMA regulation, and assess the organization ability to bring those violations into compliance (such as flood vents covered). In short: that we have the knowledge and tools necessary to properly implement floodplain management regulations). It was a very informative visit and we will continue to work on bringing those issues into compliance.
- City Clerk attended City Council and Public Works Committee joint work session to finalize the Water Ordinance. This draft ordinance was brought to Council for adoption on Council Meeting on September 15, 2014.
- The City Clerk attended City Council meeting on September 15, 2014.

- The City Clerk attended a second City Council and Public Works Committee joint workshop to discuss potential amendments to the sewer ordinance.
- The City Clerk attended the first Weekly Staff Meeting. Staff is planning to meet on a weekly base to discuss issues relevant to City operation. Each member of the staff gave a synopsis of what is happening in their department and staff reviewed and strategized about potential solutions to mitigate and/or solve outstanding problems.
- The City Clerk was asked by Council to schedule a combined joint meeting with the Public Works Committee for September 23rd to finalize the sewer ordinance.
- The City Clerk was asked to schedule a City Council works session on September 29th at 6:30 pm to talk about the Vernonia Community Learning Center (VCLC) and how to better utilized this building. The building was built thanks to a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) that demanded that its use be only for community based activities for five years from time of completion. The five year timeframe has already expired.

CITY ADMINISTRATOR /ADMINISTRATION

- The City Administrator attended an LOC sponsored “Small Cities Support Network Meeting in Wood Village. Representatives from the League of Oregon Cities (LOC), City/County Insurance Services (CIS) and almost thirty municipalities of Portland Metro Region 2 were in attendance. This group meets periodically to discuss Legislative Updates that might be relevant to Oregon Municipalities. Also an update from each of the different municipalities is given in order to collaborate on the solution of potential outstanding common issues.
- The City Administrator met with City Attorney (Ruben Cleaveland) to discuss ongoing legal issues. The City attorney also briefed the City Administrator and City Council (in executive session) during the Council meeting about potential legal issues and potential litigations.
- The City Administrator attended the joint City Council/Public Works Committee workshop to discuss drafting the new language for the sewer ordinance.
- Former City Councilor Shirlee Daughtry was very kind to invite the City Administrator for a tour of the local cemeteries. Shirlee is an historian of the cemeteries and has dedicated countless hours to the maintenance and improvement of the cemetery grounds and facilities. She has tremendous knowledge and passion, and is truly inspirational in her desire to be sure that the cemeteries be respected as a community asset and not forgotten and neglected. Potential strategies for improvement of the grounds and facilities were also recommended to the City Administrator for potential discussion with the community and the City Council



Shirlee Daughtry visiting the two local cemeteries.

- The City Administrator met with Mayor Mitchell and Councilor Bruce McNair to tour citywide properties and parks to identify potential opportunities for tree harvesting. During the past Council meeting the City Council had directed staff to begin preparation for a report about the opportunity and feasibility to harvest trees at City owned facilities. A report should be ready for presentation to Council in October.
- Staff met for the first Staff meeting. Department heads and the City Administrator will meet weekly for staff meeting in order to share information, to update each department about potential outstanding issues , and to generate proposal and strategies needed for the functioning and operation of all City's activities.
- The City Administrator, and Jeff Burch (Public Works Foreman) met with Vernonia School District Superintendent (Aaron Miller) and Vernonia contacted School District Ground Foreman Mark Brown to discuss immediate watering needs and procedures/protocols at Spencer Park softball and soccer fields. City and School District staff have agreed to meet and review the terms of the intergovernmental agreement to clarify scope of responsibilities as stated in the legal document. The City is working very closely with the School District, and the two entities are building a very solid strategic partnership.