

Minutes of the Veneta City Council

January 28, 2013

Present: Sandra Larson, Brittany Boothe, Thomas Cotter, Victoria Hedenstrom, and Thomas Laing

Others: Ric Ingham, City Administrator; Kay Bork, Community Development Director; Shauna Hartz, Finance Director; Chris Workman, City Recorder/Human Resources and Risk Management Administrator; Darci Henneman, Assistant City Recorder; Sgt. Doug Osborne, LCSO; Joan Mariner, Herb Vloedman, and Michelle Ossowski, Fern Ridge Review

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Sandra Larson called the Veneta City Council to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

Mayor Sandra Larson gave her State of the City Address. A copy is attached.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

Joan Mariner, 25712 Cochran Ct., Veneta, OR

Ms. Mariner thanked the City Council for the work and time they put forth and welcomed the new council members. She said the Council does a great job. She said the City has a great staff and we need to be grateful for where we live and for the kind of the community that we have.

Herb Vloedman, 25115 Luther Lane, Veneta, OR

Mr. Vloedman thanked the new council members for making a commitment to the Veneta City Council. He said the way the City addresses land use decisions can assist with the resurgence of development in the City. He said the Planning Commission voted to not renew the blanket three year extensions on land use applications at their last meeting. He said the Council has a challenge to balance out the health and safety of the City but also take into consideration how it will affect developers. He said the poor economy still makes securing finance a time consuming process for developers. Lenders don't want to talk to developers unless they have an approved plan and if it takes more than a year to work through the financing, the plan could be in a state of extension before it actually gets financed. He asked Council members to please consider using additional extension options to seed the excitement into the community as a place to attract developers back to Veneta.

CONSENT AGENDA

MOTION: Thomas Cotter made a motion to approve the consent agenda as presented. Brittany Boothe seconded the motion.

Vote: Thomas Laing, aye; Thomas Cotter, aye; Sandra Larson, aye; Victoria Hedenstrom aye; and Brittany Boothe, aye.

The consent agenda as approved included Minutes for January 14, 2013, Accounts Payable through January 15, 2013, and the Civic Calendar for February, 2013.

5. COUNCIL BUSINESS AND REPORTS

a. Business

(1) Lane County Sheriff's Office (LCSO) Activity Report

Sgt. Osborne reviewed the activity reports with Council members. He said the reports are generated from the Records Management Dept. and will always be about 1 ½ months behind. He said the reports include varying degrees of crimes. Sgt. Osborne said he will provide a template with code definitions at the next Council meeting as well as a 2012 wrap up. He asked Council members to please let him know if they have an issue to discuss with him. He said there is a speed trailer at Veneta Elementary because of a high number of speeding vehicles and drivers not stopping for school busses when their red lights are flashing.

In response to a question from Thomas Cotter, Sgt. Osborne said the reports have been refined down to only include activity within city limits and Elmira High School.

In response to a question from Victoria Hedenstrom, Sgt. Osborne said the calls identified as "unknown problem" arise from a call to dispatch where the caller doesn't know what is wrong but requests a deputy. He said many times after a deputy responds to one of these calls the call gets changed from "unknown or generic" to "welfare check" and other times by error the call doesn't get changed.

In response to a question from Mayor Larson, Sgt. Osborne said of the 391 calls that came in only 127 were crimes which generated a police report.

(2) Liaison Appointment to Committees

Mayor Larson made the following liaison appointments:

Mayor Larson: School District liaison and LCOG alternate

Thomas Cotter: LCOG and LACT liaison and Chamber alternate

Brittany Boothe: Park Board liaison and Fern Ridge Community Action Network liaison.

Victoria Hedenstrom: Chamber liaison and Park Board alternate

Thomas Laing: Mid Lane Community Cares liaison

b. Councilor/Committee Liaison Reports

Thomas Cotter said he did not attend the last LACT meeting, however Ric did and he asked Ric if he would like to provide an update.

Ric said hopefully the committee will be making some funding recommendation at the February meeting so there may be information provided at that time.

Mayor Larson said she attended the School Board Appreciation Day. She said the appraisal of Noti Elementary came in around \$500,000. She said the appraiser indicated it was difficult to do. She said Elmira High School and Lane Fire Authority will conduct an emergency simulation called "Operation Falcon Defender". Mayor Larson said she also attended the LCOG Mayors' roundtable meeting hosted by Mayor Christine Lundberg of Springfield. She said a discussion took place about creating a county-wide calendar so events could be scheduled around one another to avoid events taking place on the same day or time. She said Mayor Lundberg was going to look into the calendar being set up through Travel Lane County.

6. STAFF REPORTS

a. Finance Director.....Shauna Hartz

(1) 2nd Quarter Financials

Shauna said the Summary Financial Report consists of two detailed reports that staff creates and reviews on a monthly basis. Summary reports are provided to the Council on a quarterly basis. Halfway through the fiscal year staff reviews this report to see if revenue is coming in at the rate anticipated during the budget process and also to confirm that most of the routine expenditures are on track (which should be about 50%). These expenditures include personnel services, utilities, and administration. Some of the categories have numbers less or more than 50%.

On the expenditure side, the exceptions will be debt service payments because they're done once or twice a year and will throw the percentages off until the year catches up. Capital outlay varies from time to time depending on what projects are being done so it's not a constant flow. Transfers will also throw the percentages off. She said the street fund revenue is at 30% because the state of Oregon is behind on sending out highway gas tax shares and several franchise payments from the previous year are not made until March. She also said that revenue in the Capital Construction/ Government fund and Capital Construction/Enterprise fund are higher than was budgeted which means that some building activity is happening in the City and we budgeted

very conservatively.

Shauna said collected SDCs go into both of these funds. The Capital Projects West Broadway Development fund is a Capital Projects fund which tracks the Service Center. She said it looks like funds are going out but nothing is coming in but then explained that because the grant is on a reimbursement basis, we need to spend the money before we are reimbursed. Also, some grants funds were awarded last fiscal year so as the work is done this fiscal year she will need to do journal entries to show that we've earned that revenue. She said because we hadn't earned the revenue it was considered deferred revenue in FY 11-12.

(2) Overview of Fiscal Year 2011-2012 Audit Report

Shauna said all governmental agencies in the State of Oregon are required to have an external audit completed at the end of each fiscal year. Two deliverables come out of that - the Audit Report and the Letter to the Mayor and Council. The City's Audit Report received the highest mark possible. Shauna reviewed the Audit Letter and asked if Council members had any questions and to contact her if they would like to further discuss the audit.

Thomas Cotter thanked Shauna for a job well done. He said Shauna's notes made the Auditor's Letter to make more sense to him.

Mayor Larson said Shauna is to be commended. She said the City's general fund balance increased \$53,936 which is a reflection of the conservative fiscal efforts made by the City. She said the City complied with Oregon Budget Law in every respect and the auditor applauded Shauna's efforts. She said the internal controls are as good as it can get considering the small number of financial staff the City has.

Shauna said even though we're appreciative of the auditor's praise, she still feels like the budget process is a work in progress. She said she would like to submit the budget document to the Oregon Municipal Finance Officers Association. They have a Distinguished Budget Award program which requires certain criteria be met. We have a significant number of those requirements already but she continues to add more requirements until she can submit it. She said once the template is made she will continue to submit the document annually.

In response to a question from Mayor Larson, Shauna said she's not ready to submit it this year but plans on submitting the budget document next year.

Shauna said with regard to internal controls, there are five main elements of internal controls and because of our limited staff numbers and time; staff has focused many internal controls on Element 5 - monitoring and reviewing. She listed changes and improvements that were completed in the past fiscal year; five of which focus on monitoring and reviewing. She said many miscodes can be found this way. She said it also helps keep that internal control element high when two sets of eyes are reviewing documents.

(3) Budget Preparation Schedule

Shauna briefly reviewed the proposed budget schedule with Council members. She said Council members will receive the proposed budget documents by April 25th (1 week prior to the first budget meeting). Staff has tentatively scheduled the 2013-14 budget meetings for the City and Urban Renewal Agency for May 2nd and May 16th and meetings general start at 6:30 p.m. Ideally she would like to see the Budgets get adopted at the June 10th regular Council meeting after the public hearings for both the City and Urban Renewal Agency. This will give staff plenty of time to make changes if something comes up. She said a consensus from the Council is needed in order for staff to move forward with the proposed budget schedule.

In response to a question from Thomas Laing, Ric said the City's budget year is from July 1 to June 30.

Ric asked if the May 2nd and May 16th dates will work for Council members.

Shauna said once the meeting dates are confirmed she will notify the five resident Budget committee members.

Ric said generally a light dinner is provided and the meetings start at 6:00 or 6:30 p.m.

After a brief discussion, it was the consensus of the Council to begin the meetings at 6:00 p.m. on May 2nd and May 16th.

- b. Community Development Director.....Kay Bork
 - (1) Fern Ridge Service Center System Development Charge (SDC) Waiver Request
Staff is requesting the Council approve waiving the System Development Charges (SDCs) for the Fern Ridge Service Center per Ordinance 452. Kay said generally SDCs for transportation, water, sewer, and parks are applied to new development except in certain circumstances. Section 12(4) of Ordinance 452 describes specific conditions for SDC exemption, more specifically municipal projects. She said since the Service Center project is a City owned property; staff interprets Section 12(4) to apply to the Fern Ridge Service Center.

Mayor Larson said it seems logical.

MOTION: Thomas Cotter made a motion to approve staff's interpretation of Ordinance 452 to waive the System Development Charges for the Fern Ridge Service Center, a municipal project. Thomas Laing seconded the motion which was approved with a vote of 5-0.

- d. City Administrator.....Ric Ingham
 - (1) Fern Ridge Chamber of Commerce Evaluation
Ric said the Fern Ridge Chamber of Commerce is reevaluating its position in the community. He provided a letter from the Chamber which outlines what the Chamber sees taking place in the next three to nine months to help determine their future. He said the Chamber is an active partner when it comes to event management; Wings and Wine and the Light Parade. The Chamber does a lot of work behind the scenes that many in the community don't see. He said unfortunately the business community doesn't see the value of the Chamber and we're seeing a reflection of that in the declining membership, revenue, engagement by business owners and a lack of willingness of people to join the Board. He said most of the Board has been in place for the last three or four years and one Board member has been on the Board for the past eight or nine years. He said there's not a lot of new blood to keep the Chamber going. The information is being provided to the Council to keep it informed on what's taking place with our local Chamber. The Council can have ongoing conversations or attend Chamber luncheons or Board meetings. He said during the budget process the Budget Committee could have a discussion about the Chamber. He said in the past the City has directed funds to subsidize chamber operations and it could be that we chose to offer more or take it away altogether and see where things go.

Mayor Larson said it would be a shame to see the Chamber to go away.

Ric said unfortunately the Fern Ridge Chamber is not unique. He said small communities are experiencing a decline in social service organizations. He said it would be a loss to the community and the City to not have the chamber as a business partner. Many businesses

use a chamber to see how a community runs.

In response to questions from Brittany Boothe, Ric said unfortunately the same three people have been volunteering at the Chamber for the last three years and if those three decide they can no longer operate the Chamber, it will likely go away. He said the biggest problem the Chamber faces is the commitment made five years ago to their very expensive retail space. He said the Chamber is looking for active feedback and if the Council would like he can ask Gina to provide a summary of the community feedback they receive. He said the Chamber is looking for active, engaged feedback right now and if they don't hear that we pretty much know what's going to happen.

In response to a question from Victoria Hedenstrom, Ric said membership for a rural chamber brings in about 40% of their budget and fundraising efforts may bring in 30%. He said usually a chamber budget comes from several revenue sources. Unfortunately, our chamber is relying on dues from approximately 100 members. He said larger cities direct some of the transient room tax dollars to a chamber for providing a visitor center or business recruitment. He said since we have little to no transient room tax dollars coming in, we are not able to provide that greater level of assistance to our Chamber. He said other than a signature event or promotional material; the chamber cannot survive on membership dues alone.

In response to a question from Thomas Laing, Ric said the Chamber solicits for members.

In response to Thomas Cotter, Ric said the person the Chamber planned to hire to do some business membership recruiting on a commission only basis did not commit to the position.

Thomas Cotter suggested a Council committee meet with the Chamber prior to the next Chamber meeting to discuss what they need.

Ric said the Chamber is requesting the community provide feedback during the next three to six months. He said the Chamber's Board meets monthly on the second Tuesday at 3:00 p.m. He said he is sure Chamber President Gina Morrell would be willing to meet with the City to talk about these issues.

Ric suggested getting on the Chamber Board's March meeting agenda. He said by that time the Chamber should have a clear sense of what direction it wants to take.

In response to a question from Brittany Boothe, Ric said Gina mentioned providing an update on the Wineries without Wall project at the March Council meeting.

Thomas Cotter said Gina's letter requested early suggestions. He suggested providing feedback in February but said he is concerned that may be rushing the Chamber.

Ric said the Chamber is trying to give their members time to respond. He said their February meeting will only give members 30 days to provide feedback.

In response to a question from Mayor Larson, Ric said the Chamber Board meetings are held the second Tuesday of the month at 3:00 p.m. and the Chamber luncheons are held the second Wednesday of the Month at 12:00 p.m. at Our Daily Bread.

Victoria Hedenstrom and Thomas Cotter volunteered to attend the February 13th Chamber luncheon at Our Daily Bread.

Thomas Cotter said he attended a wine tasting during the holidays when Gina indicated the Wineries without Walls project had been very successful.

Mayor Larson said it's sad to see that the momentum for Wineries without Walls is there but she's concerned what will happen to the program if the Chamber loses its retail space.

(2) Fiscal Year 2012-13 Rural Tourism Marketing Program (RTMP) Funds

Ric said every year incorporated communities in Lane County receive a proportional allocation of the transient room taxes collected in Lane County. Cities that have a greater number of hotels receive a larger portion of the funds. Even though Veneta has no motels, we're fortunate to still receive \$6,572.21. He said depending on the Chamber and the Wings & Wine Festival, those funds could be rolled over to future years and future activities. He said Shauna keeps a good record of what comes in and what has been spent. Ric said Lane County has recently streamlined the process to only require a Work Plan be submitted which must still meet the funding criteria outlined by the County. Staff is requesting the Council approve the Lane County Rural Tourism Marketing Program Work Plan.

In response to a question from Brittany Boothe, Ric said the Lane County Board of Commissioners want to see that we're investing the RTMP dollars appropriately and not just spending a small portion of the funds and banking the majority of it.

Mayor Larson suggested the funds could be used to staff a visitor center.

In response to a question from Victoria Hedenstrom, Ric said the visitor's center is staffed by volunteers from 12:00 noon to 5:00 p.m. on Mondays, Wednesday and Fridays and since the conception of the Wineries without Walls project, Vicki Piva is there on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. He said they have good coverage with volunteers.

In response to questions from Brittany Boothe, Ric said in the past the City contracted with the Chamber to provide registration services for the Wings and Wine event and operation of the visitor's center. He said the proposed Work Plan provides for the same amount but it's going in different directions. Ric said of the Business Assistance funds the Chamber received for the Wineries without Walls project, \$10,000 went to the consultant for the business plan and \$10,000 to \$15,000 provided operating funds and inventory.

In response to a question from Mayor Larson, Ric said the Chamber keeps a separate set of books for the Wineries without Walls project which includes the Business Assistance funds provided by the City.

MOTION: Thomas Cotter made a motion to approve the Lane County Rural Tourism Marketing Program Work Plan. Thomas Laing seconded the motion which was approved with a vote of 5-0.

City Recorder/HR & RM Administrator.....Chris Workman
Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with Lane County Fire District No. 1(LCFD No.1)

Chris said several months ago Sgt. Osborne approached the City about a Justice Attorney General grant that could be used to purchase surveillance equipment for the skate park as a way to deter negative activity. The Council approved the City take the necessary steps to purchase and install the equipment. Chris said the equipment has been purchased and is ready to go. Staff has been working through the installation and it was decided that the best location for the recording equipment would be at the Fire Station. Chris said staff is requesting the Council approve the Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with Lane County Fire District No. 1.

In response to a question from Thomas Cotter, Ric said legal counsel did not review the IGA because they also represent the Fire District.

In response to a question from Brittany Boothe, Chris said the equipment is fairly expensive so the location needed to be secure. Additionally, cost of trenching and running line would be expensive, so we opted to use wireless transmitters instead. This will save installation costs, we won't have to lease space from a private business and we'll save having to pay a monthly internet fee. He said the most affordable solution is to use a wireless connection and there is a clear line of sight to the Fire Station. Having the recording equipment at the Fire Station will keep it secure and allow deputies and staff access 24 hours a day.

In response to a question from Brittany Boothe, Ric said the camera feed will be placed online so the deputies will be able to view it live. Also, if a crime took place at night, we would be able to download a section of the footage to a thumb drive. He said the beauty of all of this is the new fiber coming in. Chief Nye offered to have the equipment installed at the Fire Station and use their expanded fiber optic capabilities so the information can be accessed much faster than regular dial up. Ric said previously the City was looking at \$40 to \$50 a month for very slow dial up internet costs just to have a live-feed camera in the park. At this point, we won't see or incur those regular costs.

In response to a question from Tom Laing, Ric said staff hears from families that they are hesitant to have their kids go to the Skate Park. Deputies recently began making foot patrols through the park and making contacts. He said the cameras are not going to solve all of the issues, but with proper signage people will know that the park is under surveillance and hopefully it will be enough of a deterrent that we can take back the park.

MOTION: Thomas Cotter made a motion to direct the City Administrator to sign the Intergovernmental Agreement with Lane County Fire District No. 1 for the housing of security camera equipment. Brittany Boothe seconded the motion which was approved with a vote of 5-0.

City Administrator..... Ric Ingham
Development Agreement with EWEB

Ric thanked the Council for allowing staff to include these two items on the agenda at such short notice. He said staff has been working with United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development (RD) and EWEB to determine what, if any, EWEB expenses could be covered under the RD funding package verses the City securing a separate financing arrangement to cover those EWEB costs. Ric provided Council members with background materials to show how we got to where we are today. He said the existing wholesale water agreement with EWEB included connecting to EWEB's line and purchasing water but did not address how EWEB's one mile of pipeline would be paid for. USDA funding will not cover any portion of the pipeline that lies in Eugene city limits so we need an alternative funding source to reimburse EWEB for the cost of the one mile of pipeline. However, USDA will allow us to incorporate some of EWEB's soft costs into our funding package, i.e. design, permitting, surveying, engineering, and field inspection related costs. Ric said the proposed development/extension agreement needs to be executed prior to RD allowing those expenses to be included. Ric said if approved, staff is proposing these soft costs could be included in the low interest, 40-year loan from RD.

In response to a question from Thomas Laing, Ric said the total project cost of \$13 million dollars has been budgeted and includes the EWEB section.

Ric said there is a great amount of background material and asked Council members if they would like him to go through it in detail.

In response to questions from Victoria Hedenstrom, Ric said we have always known that RD would not pay for EWEB's stretch of pipeline and that we would need to find a way to fund it. This agreement will allow for some of those costs to be captured in the RD funding. EWEB's memo breaks down the costs, some of which can be reimbursed. Ric said EWEB has offered financing to the City at a 5.5% to 6% interest rate, but staff has always maintained that it would look for the best funding package possible. The original plan four years ago was to roll EWEB's financing into a debt service plan where an incremental amount would be charged to customers as part of their utility bill but now staff would like to do better than that.

MOTION: Thomas Cotter made a motion to direct the City Administrator to enter into an Extension Agreement with EWEB for the purpose of including EWEB expenses into the Rural Development Funding Package. Victoria Hedenstrom seconded the motion which passed with a vote of 5-0.

(3) Questions from the Council

In response to a question from Thomas Cotter, Ric said soft costs for EWEB's one mile of pipeline include an estimated design cost of about \$30,000 and \$27,000 for field inspections and a portion of the survey relay work for the Veneta metering station. He said it's not a lot; somewhere around \$50,000 to \$100,000. He said the design should be about 95% complete next month so these are just estimated cost figures.

Mayor Larson said there's a possibility it will be less and not more. She also thanked staff for their reports.

Ric said in the past Council members acted as informal liaisons to other community partners; Marion Esty sat on the Fern Ridge Library Foundation Board and Tim Brooker was involved with Lane County Fire District #1. He said they both provided updates to the Council and at some point the Council may want to look to other significant community partners that we may want to build a strong relationship with.

Ric said there's been some discussion about requests coming before the Planning Commission which will eventually come before the City Council. He said during the goal setting session, staff proposed holding some Work Sessions. Staff would like to use the February 11th Council meeting as a Work Session to focus on the land use process, the City's Comprehensive Plan, zoning, etc. He said staff is hearing many comments about development in the community; new commercial developments and subdivisions are being purchased. He said staff would like to get the Council more familiar with how the City deals with land use applications and more importantly, how the Comprehensive Plan drives some of those decisions.

In response to a question from Mayor Larson, Ric said staff will always be very guarded to not feed information to the Council before a specific request has gone to the Planning Commission. He said the Planning Commission is required to deliberate and make a decision prior to the bulk of the information coming to the City Council. Staff wants to make sure things are done in the correct sequence.

Mayor Larson suggested staff could explain SDCs in general and what has taken place up to this point.

Ric said if the Council is okay with a Work Session on February 11th, staff will include a discussion about SDCs.

In response to a question from Thomas Cotter, Ric said the February 11th Work Session would be in lieu of the meeting and no decisions are made during a Work Session. Ric said at this time he doesn't see a lot of items that would require Council action; however, if

something came up, a regular Council meeting could be held afterwards.

Kay asked for clarification if the Council would like the timeline issue brought up by Mr. Vloedman and/or SDCs to be included in the Work Session or just SDCs.

Ric said the broader picture is an understanding of Oregon Land Use, Senate Bill 100 and how our Comprehensive Plan is defined within it. He said the timeline issue is before the Planning Commission and they need to deliberate before the Council is provided any information.

In response to a question from Victoria Hedenstrom, Ric said discussions about the multi-use path along Highway 126 came out of the community forum in 2012. The Council then chose to submit the STIP application in October to try to secure funding for the design, engineering, and environmental report. The Council made a commitment to move forward with that phase of the project in October.

Victoria said a person came to her and asked why Veneta is spending all this money for a bike path that will only be used by homeless people to get back and forth between Eugene to Veneta and that it won't be safe.

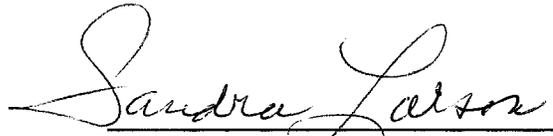
Ric responded that he had emailed Victoria additional information about the multi-use path and said he will confirm he has Victoria's correct email address.

Mayor Larson said the paper misprinted the project cost at \$100,000,000.

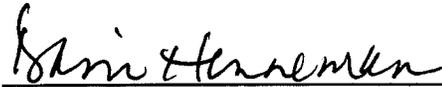
Ric said the newspaper ran a correction that the phase of the project the City is proposing is \$140,000 and the City's commitment is a \$14,000 match. Ric said the proposal to turn Highway 126 into a four lane roadway with a multi-use path is the \$100,000,000 project.

7. OTHER
None

8. ADJOURN
Mayor Larson adjourned the Veneta City Council at 8:50 p.m.


Sandra Larson, Mayor

ATTEST:


Darci Henneman, Assistant City Recorder
(minutes prepared by Dhenneman)

2012 State of the City Address
(Given January 28, 2013)

2012 was a turbulent year worldwide. Some even prepared for the world to end on the Winter Solstice, but here we are, fortunate to be living in Veneta, Oregon. where it was a year of progress and celebration, partnership and change.

Progress:

The need for clean, safe water was the impetus behind the drive for Veneta's incorporation in 1962, and it is fitting that in its 50th anniversary year, the city began construction of a 13-mile pipeline that will enable us to purchase bulk water from EWEB. Combined with our groundwater sources, EWEB's McKenzie River water will insure a secure, safe water supply sufficient to serve Veneta residents for fifty years and beyond. What a legacy!

Funded with a low-interest 40-year federal loan, the pipeline is expected to be completed in this year. Total costs for the project are now estimated at \$13 million, about \$3.5 million less than originally budgeted. This is a significant reduction that will result in savings to Veneta residents.

Groundbreaking for the Fern Ridge Service Center on West Broadway, Veneta's other major construction project, was held during the Veneta Harvest Festival in September. It was the culmination of six years of collaborative work, fund-raising and planning by the City, Mid-Lane Community Partnerships, and the senior programs of Lane Council of Governments (LCOG).

A \$250,000 grant from the Ford Family Foundation as well as locally raised funds provided the required match for a \$1.5 million community development block grant to build the facility.

The Fern Ridge Service Center will house the senior services and meal programs provided by LCOG, as well as the LOVE Project's Food Pantry, services that have outgrown their current home in the Tony Garcia Center. With luck and decent weather, the dedication ceremony for the center will be held during this year's Harvest Festival, an annual fund-raiser for the service center that grew to 44 vendors last year.

Highway 126 between Veneta and Eugene got some long-awaited attention from the Oregon Department of Transportation. Three well-attended community forums held at Elmira High School provided local input on the agency's Highway 126 Fern Ridge Corridor Plan. Residents clearly preferred an upgrade to a four-lane highway, and were adamant regarding the need for a separate multi-use path. It is unrealistic to expect that the four-lane highway will be constructed in the near future, but the plan also includes spot improvements to the highway to enhance safety and navigability, which we hope will be given a high priority on the so-called STIP list (State Transportation Improvement Program). The city is also pressing for inclusion of funds for the environmental study and

design of a bicycle and pedestrian path between Eugene and Veneta, connecting to the Fern Ridge Path and the Amazon Trail, largely via Cantrell, Perkins and Central Roads.

Those big EPUD trucks and workers have been doing more than holding up traffic and trimming trees along Territorial. They have been installing fiber-optic cable that will eventually provide broadband speed Internet not only to “community anchors” including City Hall, the library, the fire station, Veneta Elementary and local medical offices, but also to Veneta’s homes and businesses. The installation is part of a federal stimulus grant to Lane Council of Governments.

And, we took another big step into the 21st Century last year, reaching agreement with ODOT to lease two spaces at the Veneta Park and Ride for an electric vehicle charging station. The station has been installed and will soon be operational.

In its fifth year of operation, The Veneta Farmers’ Market grew to an average of 155 customers and 11 regular farm vendors, in addition to six regular consignees. The market took an important step toward independent operation with the formation of the Downtown Veneta Farmers’ Market Board of Directors.

The State of Oregon approved Veneta’s application for an enterprise zone, one of only 68 statewide. Enterprise zones are designed to attract new businesses or allow expansion of existing businesses by offering property tax exemption for a limited time, if specific criteria are met, including an increase in local jobs. Our enterprise zone includes underutilized industrial sites in the Northwest Employment Center—aka the Veneta Business Park—and city-owned property off Jack Kelley Drive, a site the city sees as ideal for a hotel or motel, uses that qualify for enterprise zone exemptions.

Celebration:

At the city’s 50th anniversary celebration in July, we showed that we know how to party. With our great partners—Applegate Lions, Kiwanis, Lane Fire Authority, and CERT Team, Mid-Lane Community Partners, Fern Ridge Educational Foundation to name a few—and with major contributions from the Oregon Country Fair, we threw a bang-up 50th birthday celebration that exemplified the spirit of community that “Venetians” share with one another and with our neighbors. It was a day to remember and to remind us how fortunate we are to live in this special place on the earth.

The Fern Ridge Review published a special anniversary section entitled “50 Years of Progress,” which included the historical timeline that now graces the council chambers. Copies of that section are available at City Hall.

The Ninth Annual Light Parade, coordinated by the Chamber of Commerce and facilitated by city staff, was the biggest ever with over 50 floats. As mayor pro tem, I got to be in my first parade since high school, riding with Santa in Lane Fire Authority’s vintage fire truck. Park Board stalwarts trimmed the city tree at Territorial and Luther Lane in the rain, but it was dry (and cold!) for the annual holiday tree lighting. Santa

talked to a record number of kids, and we were entertained by not one but three school choirs, from Veneta and Elmira Elementary and Elmira High School.

Partnerships:

I have already referenced several of our valued community partners, and many others have contributed to the progress, viability and livability of our community.

The Lane County Sheriff's Department addressed local public safety concerns at a community awareness meeting held at Veneta's community center, at which Sheriff Tom Turner and area residents discussed the impact of the county's cuts to public safety funding. Thanks to the wisdom of our predecessors who decided to contract with the sheriff's department for local police protection, Veneta will continue to see 20-hour daily patrol coverage, in spite of countywide patrol reductions. Of course, the reduction in jail beds and the resulting "revolving door" for offenders is of concern to Veneta, as are issues of mutual aid.

Lane County Fire District #1 and Lane Rural Fire and Rescue completed a long process to consolidate as Lane Fire Authority, creating a 276-square mile district headquartered in Veneta. The Veneta station has agreed to house the hardware for the city's soon-to-be installed surveillance cameras at the skate park to help deter undesirable activity there.

The Fern Ridge Library District continued to expand services to area residents, who, in turn, renewed the library's five-year local option levy with 70% of the vote in November.

The Ford Family Foundation—a good friend to Veneta—conducted its third Ford Institute Leadership Training designed to promote vitality in rural communities. Each cohort collaborates on a tangible contribution to the community. Previous cohorts contributed the reader board at the Veneta fire station and the concession stand at the Bolton Hill Sports Complex. Cohort Three has installed beautiful bike racks at the library, at Our Daily Bread, and at several other locations throughout Fern Ridge.

In October, Veneta hosted 26 visitors from the Grantmakers of Oregon and Southwest Washington. Many partners, including the Fern Ridge School District, the Fern Ridge Library, the Corps of Engineers, the Long Tom Watershed Council, Mid-Lane Community Partnerships, Fern Ridge Education Foundation and the Ford Family Foundation, collaborated to introduce these influential charitable donors to the Veneta/Fern Ridge community and demonstrate what can be accomplished in a progressive rural community when caring citizens come together to advance the common good.

As a birthday present to Veneta, the Applegate Lions Club informally adopted Ralph Johnson Park, sprucing it up in time for the celebration. This inspired the Park Board and city staff to initiate a formal Adopt-A-Park Program, applicable to all city parks.

Veneta's active and innovative Park Board collaborated with Veneta Elementary to put on a hugely successful Arbor Day/Earth Day event for first time at the school, and with Kiwanis, high school Key Club and local Boy Scouts to hold the ever-growing Easter Egg Hunt, also held at the school.

Change:

2012 was a year of change for city staff and government.

Community Service Director Brian Issa and Planner Zac Moody went on to other pursuits.

Kay Bork was promoted to Community Development Director and Lisa Garbett was hired as Associate Planner.

After twenty years of superlative service to the city, for which the council honored him, Kyle Schauer became Veneta's Public Works Director.

Mayor Sharon Hobart's resignation as a result of significant injuries suffered in a fall was an unwelcome and untimely change. Her ardent spirit, her great good humor and her tireless devotion to this community are sorely missed.

Long-time City Councilor Marion Esty retired with plans to spend more time traveling and visiting family. We will miss her dedication and the historical perspective that comes with such long service.

79% of Veneta's registered voters turned out in November to elect Victoria Hedenstrom and Tom Laing to the City Council, and I was honored to be elected mayor. I am confident that Victoria and Tom will bring new energy and ideas to our deliberations.

Future:

Veneta is a vital and progressive small city with much to be proud of. There are many reasons why it is a good place to live.

Veneta is a well-governed, well-managed, well-functioning city poised to capitalize on a recovering economy. We have made significant investments in infrastructure and a pedestrian-friendly West Broadway. Veneta continues to seize every opportunity for economic development.

There's every reason to believe that the council will continue to work together for the common good in a civil and orderly fashion, agreeing to disagree at times, as it should. There's no doubt that Veneta will continue to thrive, largely due to our remarkable staff of just 15 talented and dedicated individuals.

Pipeline and service center construction will take center stage for most of 2013, but there is other work to be done as well. Improvements to Hunter Avenue and Eighth Street are scheduled, for instance, and we will continue to advocate for a multi-use path and Hwy 126 spot improvements identified in the Fern Ridge Corridor Plan. On my personal wish list are a partnership with the school district to provide quality after-school programs, partnership with the Applegate Pioneer Museum to place historical markers at significant locations, and partnership with the new Farmers' Market Board to expand the market's offerings and customer base.

For whom do we work and plan if not for our children and grandchildren? In conjunction with the 50th anniversary, we asked students in elementary, middle and high school to look 25 years into Veneta's future, the future we are creating for them today.

Predictions of zombie apocalypse notwithstanding, most of them provided thoughtful, hopeful responses. Several students said they thought water would be the big issue in 25 years. I'm proud to say with certainty that it won't be, thanks to our pipeline project.

More sources of fast food figured prominently in their hopes for the future, but there was also a remarkable degree of high-mindedness in their messages to the future Veneta. Case in point: 17-year old Jenna Loheed wrote, "I hope that in 25 years Veneta is thriving with life and excitement! For everyone to be very involved with the community, and to have a Taco Bell!!"

Annalisa Linn, 13, expressed a desire for a "place in our small town for teenagers to hang out," and Alicia Braunger, also 13, said, "I would love to see no homeless people and no more runaway kids. It's hard to see that."

I think 15-year old Morgan Craig captured the essence of our community and our hopes for the future when she wrote, "Dear Future Veneta: I want to thank you for a close-knit, loving community. I have lived here my whole life and it's almost like one big family. I hope it will continue to be that way."

Me, too, Morgan.