

Minutes of the Veneta City Council

January 26, 2015

Present: Sandra Larson, Thomas Cotter, Thomas Laing, and Tim Brooker

Absent: Victoria Hedenstrom

Others: Ric Ingham, City Administrator; Kay Bork, Community Development Director; Shauna Hartz, Finance Director; Kyle Schauer, Public Works Director; Katie Babits, Management Analyst; Darci Henneman, Assistant City Recorder; Steven Reister, Philip Foster, Tristan Cornelius, Stacy Cornelius, Sgt. Halvorson, LCSO; Liz Killam, and Joan Mariner, Fern Ridge Review

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Sandra Larson called the Veneta City Council to order at 7:04 p.m.

2. STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS - MAYOR SANDRA LARSON

Mayor Larson gave the State of the City address. A copy is attached.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

Steven Reister, 88197 Eastwood Ct., Veneta, OR

Mr. Reister said on behalf of the Veneta Neighborhood Watch Group he would like to formally request Council's support of the program.

Mayor Larson said the request is listed on tonight's agenda.

4. PUBLIC HEARING – (CONT.) TO DETERMINE DANGEROUS BUILDING ABATEMENT

(1) Mayor Larson opened the Public Hearing at 7:16 p.m.

(2) Staff Report

Bork said the City Council is continuing the December 15, 2015 public hearing to specify abatement for the accessory structure at 24988 West Broadway. She said the City Building Official inspected the accessory structure and determined the building was dangerous. She said the public hearing initially started in December and is continuing tonight. The Council can decide to abate the accessory building or require the building to be torn down. She said tonight's public hearing is an opportunity to gather information, the building owner, as well as the City Building Official are in attendance if the Council has any questions for either. She said she did not specify a date in either of the suggested motions and asked when making a motion that either 60 or 90 days be included in the motion.

(3) Questions from Council

In response to a question from Thomas Cotter, Bork said tonight's Public Hearing and any action taken by the Council is only to address the small accessory building.

Philip H. Foster spoke on behalf of the property owner. He said he is residing at the Tootle Building as caretaker to clean up and make improvements to the building. He said abatement has begun on the small house by sealing the two penetration areas at the front of the building to exclude animals from entering. He said the small building is in great disrepair and he found nine feral cats living in that structure. He said two were quite ill and the Veneta Friends of Feral Cats have placed the cats in new homes except for one that is recovering. He said he agrees with the abatement and they are proceeding as quickly as they can. The small structure was stripped of the old growth lumber, it is beyond rehabilitation and precludes it from being rebuilt as a residence. However, in his opinion, the Tootle Building is invaluable to the community because it contains original materials. He said he would like to remove materials from the small structure to use to repair the Tootle Building. He said he is working on a marketing campaign to see if he can find some investors or partners that might want to rehabilitate the Tootle Building and he would need about a year to complete restoration to that building. He said all

restoration would meet the abatement requirements and he hopes to see the entire corner restored to a living breathing part of the community.

In response to a question from Thomas Cotter, Mr. Foster said he has held a contractor's license in the past but currently he is not licensed. He said the only permit needed is a demolition permit for the smaller structure but it is beyond his means to lift the Tootle Building.

In response to a question from Thomas Laing, Mr. Foster said it would take a few days to take the small structure apart but in the meantime he would use it for storage.

In response to a question from Mayor Larson, Mr. Foster said the materials from the small structure would be better preserved as they stand. He said if it's torn down, the materials could get damaged.

In response to a question from Thomas Laing, Mr. Foster said he has moved buildings before and many times when they're lifted or moved a building will straighten out to a large degree. He said the Tootle Building is constructed with good materials. An engineer and contractor could straighten the building and using the matching lumber from the small building would be ideal. He would like to see the small house stand until they can find the investors and partners to restore the Tootle Building.

In response to a question from Mayor Larson, Bork said the Building Official could make sure that any restoration complies with the intent of the letter.

In response to a question from Tim Brooker, Ingham said the Council received a lot of materials on this matter and the Council directed staff to set a public hearing in October 2014 to specify abatement for the small building only.

In response to a question from Tim Brooker, Bork said previously the Council determined just the small structure is a nuisance building and the City Building Inspector determined the same building as a danger. She said the large building is not part of this hearing or action.

Mr. Foster said he is planning on an abatement measure for the Tootle Building so animals can't get into the building.

In response to a question from Thomas Cotter, Mr. Foster said the Tootle Building is a great asset to the City and could be declared a historic building. He said the odds of finding investors are very good.

(4) Public Comment

(5) Mayor Larson closed the Public Hearing at 7:38 p.m.

(6) Deliberation & Decision

In response to a question from Thomas Cotter, Mayor Larson said the Council needs to decide abatement of the building or demolishing. She said they can set any time frame for either option.

Thomas Cotter said with the new information, the Council has a choice. He said originally he wanted to declare the building be demolished by a certain time.

Thomas Laing said the small structure can't be made safe but the Council should give him time to remove the materials he needs to make repairs to the Tootle Building.

In response to a question from Tim Brooker, Thomas Cotter said Mr. Foster wants enough time to dismantle the smaller structure and use the materials to repair the Tootle Building.

Thomas Cotter agreed with Thomas Laing.

Tim Brooker said he wanted clarification that if Mr. Foster makes the small structure safe it will meet state and local laws.

Bork said the Council has two options. The first is to direct the building be made safe according to the City Building Official's memo (secure the building to keep people and rodents from entering). The other option is to direct the building be demolished. The Council also has the option, according to code, to set a timeline for either one of those actions to take place. She said that would meet the intent of the code to decide between those two options on only the small building.

In response to a question from Tim Brooker, Bork said the work Mr. Foster described doesn't require a permit so he is not required to "meet applicable state and local contracting laws and regulations". She said any work done that required a permit would need to comply with state and local laws.

Mayor Larson said she is in favor of giving the owner and Mr. Foster time to remove the needed materials from the small structure.

MOTION: Thomas Cotter made a motion to declare the accessory structure at 24988 West Broadway a dangerous building and order the structure to be made safe within 90 days from today and if that deadline is not met, the work shall be undertaken by City personnel and equipment, or bids will be obtained according to applicable local and state contracting laws and regulations, to complete the work at the expense of the owner of the property. Thomas Laing seconded the motion which passed with a vote of 4-0.

5. CONSENT AGENDA

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

VOTE: Thomas Laing, aye; Thomas Cotter, aye; Sandra Larson, aye; Victoria Hedenstrom, aye; Tim Brooker, aye.

The consent agenda as approved included Minutes for December 8, 2014 Work Session, Minutes for December 15, 2014 Work Session, Minutes for December 15, 2014, Minutes for January 12, 2015 Work Session, Minutes for January 12, 2015, Accounts Payable - To be Paid – Payable through January 21, 2015, Civic Calendar for February, 2015, Approval of Liquor License (change of ownership) for Danielle Taste Veneta (formerly DJMcRB, LLC, dba Taste), 88330 Territorial Rd., (located in the West Lane Shopping Center), and Year End Planning & Building Activity Report.

6. COUNCIL BUSINESS AND REPORTS

a. Business

- (1) Request from Tristan Cornelius to waive the Community Center rental fee for a fundraising event for the Mr. Falcon contest.

In response to Mayor Larson, Mr. Cornelius is wanting to hold a rummage sale to raise funds for the Mr. Falcon contest. He said the proceeds for the sale will go to Mid Lane Cares.

MOTION: Thomas Cotter made a motion to waive the Community Center rental fee for Tristan Cornelius on February 7, 2015 to hold a fundraising event for the Mr. Falcon Contest. Tim Brooker seconded the motion which passed with a vote of 4-0.

In response to a question from Mayor Larson, Stacy Cornelius said this year Elmira High School is holding the Mr. Falcon Contest rather than last year when it was the Ms. Falcon Contest. She said 90% of the proceeds collected will go to Mid Lane Cares and 10% will go to the Elmira Booster Club to be used for athletic scholarships.

- (1) Lane County Sheriff's Office Activity Report
Sgt. Halvorson reviewed his report and asked if there were any questions.

Thomas Cotter said he still likes the old reports. He said the current report doesn't provide much detail and it's not enough information for him.

Ingham said the current report was developed because the previous report included a lot of personal information, addresses, and the specific crimes committed. He said he still receives the old report and it is available to the Council upon request but because of the content of the information, it really wasn't information that should be included in the packet.

In response to a question from Thomas Laing, Sgt. Halvorson said the data shows that some crimes increase in the summer months. He said we have a six or seven month picture and it's not alarming but it shows a consistent spike in crime during the summer and that's not just in Veneta but it's in Creswell, and countywide.

In response to a question from Mayor Larson, Sgt. Halvorson said he still looks for crime patterns in specific areas. He said he breaks down the call list by category which identifies hot spots and then they focus patrols on those areas. He said he reviews the call list monthly which results in the report he provides to the Council.

Sgt. Halvorson said Lane County Sheriff's Office (LCSO) is conducting a trial run with body cameras in order to determine if it is a feasible program to pursue. He said three deputies and one sergeant have been chosen to wear a body camera; Deputy Jahn with the Veneta patrol is one of the three deputies. He said Deputy Jahn is fairly active at night so he's a good choice to wear the camera. Sgt. Halvorson said the cameras aren't very expensive but the camera and footage maintenance is, as well as the cost of responding to public records requests.

Sgt. Halvorson said the first "Meet the Sergeant" meetings start this Saturday, January 31st at 1:00 p.m. and will be held the last Saturday of the month at the Fern Ridge Community Library. He said residents are encouraged to stop by to ask questions or simply get to know him. He said this follows the trend he'd like to focus on that he is available to the community. He said the Neighborhood Watch program will also be discussed. He said the Veneta Crime Watch Group (VCWG) will meet on February 24th to establish block captains. He said he will also attend that meeting to answer any questions and promote that LCSO, the City of Veneta and Veneta patrols recognize and encourage the VCWG. Sgt. Halvorson said he wanted to update the Council on Lane County's budget. He said things are a little delayed because the County has been slow in getting budget numbers to the Sheriff's Office. He said some measures are still pending at the federal level so there are many unknown variables. However, regardless of what happens in Lane County it's not likely to affect Veneta's policing.

In response to a question from Thomas Laing, Sgt. Halvorson said since Sheriff Turner held the Community Awareness meeting in Veneta last December, it was promising that a bill would pass and funding Secure Rural Schools (SRS) but the bill actually died. He said they're working with lobbyists and congress on another bill to receive those SRS funds. He said the County is anticipating a three million dollar deficit and he's not sure how that deficit will affect the Sheriff's Office. He said they may take all of it or a portion of it.

Sgt. Halvorson said the hiring process is tricky because his department can't over-hire and new deputies need 11 months of training before they can fill a deputy position on their own. He said it's difficult to bring people on now not knowing what's going to happen July 1st.

The Council thanked Sgt. Halvorson for the report.

(2) Liaison Appointment to Committees

Mayor Larson asked if the Council had any questions about the proposed appointments, if not, she appointed herself liaison to Lane Council of Governments (LCOG) and the School District; Thomas Cotter liaison to the Fern Ridge Chamber of Commerce and LCOG alternate; Victoria Hedenstrom liaison to the Park Board and the School District alternate; Tim Brooker liaison to Lane Area Commission on Transportation (LACT) and Ric Ingham as alternate; Thomas Laing liaison to Mid Lane Cares.

(3) City Day at the Capital

Ingham said Oregon Mayors participate in this event to try to build strong relationships with local legislators and would also like to include City Councilors in an effort to be on a first name basis with our local legislators.

Mayor Larson said it would seem reasonable to go as a group. She said anyone interested in attending should talk with Ingham.

(4) Lane Council of Governments (LCOG) Annual Banquet

Mayor Larson said the annual appreciation dinner is Friday, February 6, 2015. She said she is hoping to see a major representation from Veneta at this year's banquet. Thomas Cotter, Thomas Laing, and Tim Brooker said they will attend.

Ric said spouses are also welcome to attend. He asked Councilors to confirm their attendance with Darci so she can make reservations for everyone.

(5) Congressional Letter of Support

Mayor Larson said this letter of support was distributed to local mayors from City of Springfield Mayor, Cynthia Lundberg. She said Mayor Lundberg is traveling to Washington DC and would like to take the letter with her. She asked if everyone has had a chance to read it and if so is there Council consensus to support Mayor Larson to sign the letter on behalf of the City of Veneta?

Ingham said as part of the United Front, we often work with the Lane County Board of Commissioners to make sure rural issues are included on the list when they go back to congress. He said the Highway 126 project continues to move up the list.

b. Councilor/Committee Liaison Reports

None.

7. STAFF REPORTS

a. Finance Director.....Shauna Hartz

(1) 2nd Quarter Fund Balance Report

Hartz reviewed the second quarterly report for this fiscal year; covering July 1, through December 31st. She reminded the Council that the expenses for personnel, materials and services stayed constant from month to month and we like to see those at 50% spent or less. One exception is the Zumwalt fund and that is because it doesn't operate every month so we won't have many expenditures for the rest of this fiscal year. She brought to the Council's attention two funds that have negative balances. She said she is waiting to do a transfer that will to close the capital construction enterprise fund (where we track water and sewer SDCs). She said the auditors asked that we break that fund into two funds, one for water and one for sewer so the transfer of 2.7 million dollars will be divided appropriately. She said the street fund has an overage in capital outlay which will require an appropriations transfer by resolution which she will bring to the Council in the next few months. She said there may be more transfers coming up so she would like to see if she can take care of all the transfers with one resolution. She said the percentage of revenue looks high compared to the budget. She said that is partly because we have received most of the property tax revenue. She said as the year goes on that percentage will decrease.

(2) Proposed Budget Calendar for FY2015-16

Hartz said this is laid out with four important dates for the Council. The first is May 7th which is when the Budget Documents will be delivered to the Council and the Budget Committee members. The first Budget Committee meeting will be Thursday, May 14th. She said staff is proposing holding the Public Hearing at the first Budget Committee meeting rather than the second. She said it's possible to only have one Budget Committee meeting but the second meeting is scheduled in the event the Budget Committee decides to have a second meeting. She said receiving the Budget Message, the Public Hearing, and allowing public comment are three requirements needed prior to adopting the Budget. All of which are scheduled to be on the First Budget Committee meeting agenda. She said with Tim Brooker now a City Councilor rather than a Citizen Budget Committee member, his partial position, which expires December 31, 2016, is now vacant. She said that partial position will be advertised in the February 4th and February 11th editions of the Fern Ridge Review. She said that vacancy ad closes on February 27th and she plans on getting that filled well before the budget process begins. She said the last date is June 8th which is a regularly scheduled Council meeting and will include the budget Public Hearings for the Urban Renewal Agency and the City and hopefully adoption of the budgets.

Mayor Larson said the word is out - we have a vacancy on the Budget Committee.

Ingham said staff tries to juggle meetings for the City Council and Planning Commission as well as other City functions during this time of year. He said Thursdays seemed like the best night for the Budget Committee to meet. He asked Councilors to please review their calendars and if there are any conflicts on the second and fourth Thursdays of June, please let staff know and calendar revisions will be made accordingly.

b. Management Analyst.....Katie Babits

(1) Adoption of a City of Veneta Communication Plan

Babits said at the October 2013 Council Goal Setting Session, the Council identified Goal No. 6 "to improve community awareness of City issues and public engagement opportunities". She said the objectives of this goal was to develop a communication plan that will promote understanding of the City and its functions; outline engagement opportunities; foster an appreciation for Veneta's history; and establish a means to disseminate and receive feedback to and from the public. In July 2014, the Communication Subcommittee collaborated to create a Communication Plan which outlines methods the City will use to communicate to residents and non-residents regarding City events and provide avenues for others to find answers to questions. To ensure the plan is working, the Committee wanted to develop some evaluation methods to measure success and identify new methods that come up throughout the year that could be put into action when needed. She said disseminating the information will primarily fall on her with assistance from the Management Team. Babits reviewed the Communication Plan with the Council and asked if there were any questions.

In response to a question from Thomas Laing, Ingham said as the Emergency Preparedness Plans develop, and depending on the situation, we would use any one of the tools identified in the Communication Plan; whether it's a Facebook broadcast or an alert broadcast.

In response to a question from Mayor Larson, Ingham said there's been a little setback in that the County is pushing for a new format and will have a brand new Emergency Operation Plan in effect this fall. He said it's an issue we need to bring back to the Council to talk about. He said our Plan is about 80% completed and now it doesn't align with Lane County. He said it's a discussion we need to have and Chief Ney is unclear on how he wants to proceed at this point

MOTION: Thomas Cotter made a motion to adopt the City of Veneta Communication Plan as presented. Tim Brooker seconded the motion which passed with a vote of 4-0.

(2) Revision of City Logo

Babits said in addition to the Communication Plan and in conjunction with updating the City's website, the City logo revision came about when discussion about updating the City's website first began. She said it was agreed that everyone should be comfortable with the logo and that it should be easily recognizable and associated with the City. In March 2013 the Council directed staff to create a Logo Committee. The Committee met and suggested the Council revisit the logo creation during the Goal Setting Session held later in the year. She said that same goal included updating the website. However, due to multiple capital projects at that time, the logo process was postponed until July 2014 when the Communication Subcommittee reconvened. A logo contest produced a lot of great results but nothing that the Committee felt really embodied the City of Veneta. The Committee decided to revise and modernize the existing City logo. Babits reviewed the color of the logo which is very similar to the current logo. She said the logo will be easily identifiable and will be placed on T-shirts, City vehicles, posters, etc. She said it will be something that people will see around the City and identify with municipal government.

MOTION: Thomas Cotter made a motion to approve the revisions to the City logo and adopt it as the official City of Veneta logo as presented. Thomas Laing seconded the motion which passed with a vote of 4-0.

c. City Administrator.....Ric Ingham

(1) Veneta Vision LLC Franchise Agreement

i. Agenda Item Summary

Ingham said back in October Country Vision and Emerald Cable came before the Council asking for a franchise agreement to deliver wireless internet and cable services to City residents. The Council granted that wish and directed staff to develop a franchise agreement to the newly formed corporation; Veneta Vision, LLC. He said Ordinance No. 518 is before the Council for first reading by title only. He said staff is excited we have additional and alternative providers and we think the competition and expanded services is a good move. He said requests from Veneta Vision to occupy or construct in the City's right-of-way or to lease any City facility will come under a separate request and are likely about 60 days out.

In response to a question from Thomas Cotter, Ingham said Milo Mecham said 5% is the maximum franchise fee allowable by federal law and is also the standard fee charged in Lane County.

ii. **Ordinance No. 518 – AN ORDINANCE GRANTING TO VENETA VISION LLC, A NON-EXCLUSIVE FRANCHISE AND RIGHT TO CONSTRUCT, OPERATE AND MAINTAIN A TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE AND TO OCCUPY RIGHTS-OF-WAY IN THE CITY OF VENETA, OREGON AND SETTING AN EFFECTIVE DATE. For First Reading by Title Only**

MOTION: Thomas Cotter made a motion to approve Ordinance No. 518 for first reading by title only. Tim Brooker seconded the motion which passed with a vote of 4-0.

Ordinance No. 518 was read into the record for first reading by title only.

(2) Neighborhood Watch Request

Ingham said Ms. Killam submitted a request and Mr. Reister made comments during the public comment session. He said the Group is requesting Council support their efforts once it gets up and running. He said the City appreciates the efforts of the Veneta Neighborhood Watch Group to get neighborhoods involved in the program. He said they want to utilize the National Neighborhood Watch program to ensure that they adhere to the highest requirements, i.e., background checks, etc. Ingham said City staff is very supportive of this and will bring all financial requests to the Council as the program evolves.

In response to a question from Thomas Laing, Ingham said how the watch program is set up really depends on the turnout of residents. He said we previously discussed having deputies provide support by attending the neighborhood block meetings once they are established.

After a brief discussion, it was the consensus of the Council to support the Veneta Neighborhood Watch Program.

Mayor Larson said the Veneta Neighborhood Watch kickoff meeting will be at 7:00 p.m. on February 24th at the Library.

Ingham said Babits will get the meetings posted on the City's website.

(3) Review of 2014 Work Plan & Goals

a. 2014 Work Plan Review

Ingham said at this point we've completed about 70% of the items established in the current Work Plan and the ground work has been established for many other activities to be done in 2015 or help with projects that will get included in the 2015-16 Work Plan. He said the Work Plan is reflective of Council priorities, and/or reflected in Master Plans, or capital improvement programs that we feel are timelier and should be addressed. He said wastewater, transportation projects, and public safety are the three top priorities. He said two other priorities were law enforcement and creating an Emergency Preparedness Plan. He said the Council, Planning Commission, and community members have been involved in updating the Economic Opportunity Analysis which will hopefully be adopted and implemented in late spring or early summer.

In response to a question from Mayor Larson, Ingham said staff is ready to move on with establishing new Council's priorities. He said we can talk about how to proceed with the establishment of those priorities.

b. 2014 Goal Setting Session Report

Ingham reviewed that report.

Mayor Larson felt there's enough unfinished business that it makes sense to review what's been accomplished and what we've discovered since.

Tim Brooker would like to see the Council review the priorities to determine if they still stand.

In response to a question from Mayor Larson, Tim Brooker said the goals themselves may need to be reviewed. He said he felt that maybe public safety is still a priority but sidewalks and pedestrian paths may not have a higher priority than street improvements.

In response to a question from Thomas Laing, Ingham said the street assessment will be presented to the Council at the February 9th meeting.

(4) Process for Establishing 2015 Council Goals & Priorities

Ingham said a survey could be developed on the goals and summaries to determine if they reflect the current priorities the Council wants to move forward with. He said what he's hearing is the Council is okay with the issues and not likely to see many new ones. He said Mr. Brooker is talking about priority of goals and are they in the order the Council wants to proceed with. He said staff will put together a review process to get Council feedback and bring it back at the next Council meeting or the second meeting in February. He said from there hopefully we can make revisions and get a new plan adopted at the first meeting in March in order to include it in the budget process. The new goals will cover a time period for 2015 and 2016. He said in January 2017 we'll have three newly elected officials and will likely go through a full or partial process at that time.

- (5) Questions from Councilors
None

8. OTHER

Ingham said the management team has tentatively scheduled Work Sessions to be held at 6:00 p.m., prior to the next five (5) Council meetings. He said if calendars allow, Work Sessions will be held on February 9th, February 23rd, March 9th, March 23rd, and April 13th. He said there are several topics that need to be discussed; Council's priorities for submitting to the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), and where we want our focus to be for Hwy 126 and Territorial. He said many of those projects are being proposed in the 2015-18 STIP but if we want to stress where we want things to be in 2018-21, we need to focus on that. He said Hartz will provide the next steps to update the utility billing process. He said Schauer will present the street assessment report at the February 9th Work Session to discuss how we want to fund and implement that, and by late March, Bork will be ready to talk about adoption of the Economic Opportunity Analysis and the Council has expressed an interest to talk specifically about the Economic Strategic Plan and the actions that would come out of that. He said all these items should really take place during Council Work Sessions.

Ingham said letters were sent to East Bolton residents impacted by the proposed sewer improvements and there is an open house scheduled for Wednesday, January 28th at 4:30 here at City Hall. He said staff spoke with a few East Bolton residents last week and they felt the City's proposal seemed pretty fair. He said staff is unclear about the level of participation we'll see at the open house but there will be four different work stations set up to answer questions about how the public improvement process works. He said the open house is not a regular Council meeting but Council members may attend.

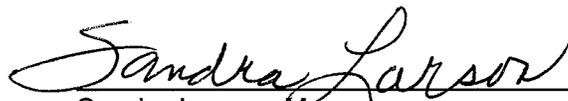
Hartz said in February the City will advertise a part time receptionist position. She said the current year's fiscal budget includes the position. She said we've had a temporary receptionist since July and it's made a big difference in scheduling and staff workloads. She said we would like to fill that position on a regular basis.

In response to a question from Thomas Laing, Hartz said it will be a regular part time position.

Ingham said the next Planning Commission meeting is Tuesday, February 3rd; the Veneta Park Board meets on Wednesday, February 4th, the LCOG award dinner is Friday, February 6th and February 9th there will be a Council Work Session prior to the regular Council meeting.

9. ADJOURN

Mayor Larson adjourned the Veneta City Council at 8:45 p.m.


Sandra Larson, Mayor

ATTEST:


Darci Henneman, Assistant City Recorder
(Minutes prepared by DHenneman)

State of the City 2015

According to the Chinese zodiac, 2014 was the year of the horse. In Veneta, however, it was the year of the chicken. Last year, we joined most of our neighboring cities in recognizing the growing interest in and benefits of urban chicken keeping, allowing backyard chickens on lots smaller than one acre, and requiring a renewable three-year permit.

Because it had been three years since the council originally addressed the issue of backyard chickens, we held two work sessions to re-educate ourselves on the subject. Because a change in Veneta's chicken policy required an amendment to Veneta's land use code, both the City Council and the Planning Commission also solicited public testimony, the preponderance favoring backyard chickens. Eight chicken permits were issued in 2014.

One of the satisfactions of serving in local government is that my fellow Councilors and I most often deal with issues of this sort. Our decisions are not world altering, but they do have a direct effect on the lives of our residents, and, happily, partisan politics play no part in those decisions.

Much to our surprise, Oregon's legalization of medical marijuana dispensaries last year generated much less interest in Veneta than did backyard chickens. The Council did hold two public work sessions examining SB 1531 and debated the pros and cons of enacting a temporary moratorium on dispensaries within the city limits. Ultimately, we voted 3 to 2 against a moratorium. By state regulation, medical marijuana dispensaries may not be located within 1,000 feet of schools and we unanimously voted to include parks in that exclusion. To date, one dispensary has located in the West Lane Center and has operated without incident.

Of course, in November, Oregon voters legalized recreational marijuana, presenting a whole new set of challenges, not only to the state but also to local jurisdictions, many of whom, including Veneta, saw both a necessity and an opportunity for increased revenue. The ballot measure precludes local taxation on marijuana sales, but Veneta and many other cities and counties passed preemptive tax measures before the election, speculating that they may be enforceable. Veneta approved a 10% tax on recreational marijuana and 0% on medical. Now we await state regulations before determining any further action.

Predatory feral chickens are the subjects of science fiction, not to be feared in spite of Veneta's new chicken policy, but feral cats are a very real problem here. Thanks to an \$18,000 grant from PetSmart Charities, Veneta has been able to fast track our "Please Don't Litter" spay and neuter program. Thanks also to an active group of volunteers and partnerships with Willamette Animal Guild and Veneta Veterinary Hospital, 166 cats were altered in 2014. This has helped to reduce our population of feral cats, but the problem and the program will continue this year. Want to adopt a kitten? Call Teresa at City Hall!

The number of building permits increased for the second year in 2014, as did requests for land use information. Applegate Landing will begin construction of 48 new homes in the spring, and a new development, Madrone Ridge, will break ground in the same area.

Upgrading and maintaining Veneta's water system to meet the needs of a growing population and orderly development came with inevitable rate increases, but the good news last January was that water rates increased 3.5%, much lower than the anticipated 20% increase. Current

projections indicate annual rate increases of just 2% for the next several years, and a 5% reduction in the sewer base rate is still in effect.

Early in 2014, the Council formally adopted six goals to guide city activities for the near future. Changing focus from large construction projects like the water pipeline and the Fern Ridge Service Center, we asked city staff to develop a work plan addressing further development of our infrastructure, improving community health and safety, encouraging business development and enhancing communication and civic engagement.

It was a year of study and planning for Veneta, in preparation for decisions to be made and and/or work to begin in 2015, because, according to author H. Stanley Judd, "A good plan is like a road map: it shows the final destination and usually the best way to get there."

In August, Public Works Director Kyle Schauer provided the Council with a comprehensive sewer infill report. We directed staff to proceed with an update of a 2009 engineer's estimate for extending sewer service to an unserved section of East Bolton and with a preliminary engineering report to determine feasibility of sewer extension for the area of Eighth Street between Dunham Avenue and Sertic Road. A revised estimate for the East Bolton project was completed and the city is moving forward with that project. We expect to address the Eighth Street report in late March.

In October, we contracted for a pavement condition assessment of the city's streets in order to develop a prioritized five-year maintenance and repair plan. The survey will also identify gaps in connectivity in Veneta's street and sidewalk network. We expect the full report to come before the Council in early February.

Veneta became a HEAL City last year, joining the Healthy Eating Active Living Campaign which is jointly sponsored by the League of Oregon Cities and the Oregon Public Health Institute. Concurrent with council goals, the HEAL campaign promotes improvements in livability and community health. In September, Veneta was awarded a \$7,000 HEAL Cities grant to help fund a conceptual design and feasibility study for a multi-use path between Veneta and Elmira, that would provide a safe route to Elmira schools for Veneta residents, as well as access to Veneta goods and services for Elmira residents. The city has contracted with Branch Engineering for a study that will determine the next steps required and the cost to build the path.

Landscape design for the four corners intersection of Territorial and Highway 126 was completed in partnership with the Westside Garden Club, an improvement that we believe will be beneficial to the recruitment of new employers and businesses. Implementation by city staff and garden club volunteers at this gateway intersection of two state highways awaits approval by the Oregon Department of Transportation. The City expects to go out to bid for landscape improvements to the northwest corner in March.

The City contracted with the University of Oregon's Community Planning Workshop, headed by Bob Parker, to conduct an Economic Opportunity Analysis and implementation strategy, critical to Veneta's Comprehensive Plan update and identifying the City's economic development goals for the next 20 years. A committee composed of the City Council, the Planning Commission and citizen stakeholders, including local business owner and resident Herb Vloedman, area resident Joan Mariner, Siuslaw Bank's Jason Alansky, and developer Phil Velie participated in the process and will develop policy recommendations, strategies, and implementing measures to

address land deficits or other issues identified in the EOA. The report is due by mid-February with review and adoption to be completed by the Planning Commission and the City Council by late March.

Business development activity has definitely picked up in Veneta, particularly at the West Lane Center. First Call Resolution, now known as FCR, opened in February and now employs 250 associates. O'Reilly's opened a big new auto parts store. Ray's Food Place emerged from bankruptcy with an ambitious makeover still in progress and Hi-School Pharmacy and Hardware bought out both Tiffany's and Kelley's Hardware, relocating the pharmacy to Ray's. West Lane Fitness will relocate to West Broadway after extensive remodeling of the former Moose Hall.

Veneta opened a new bulk water station on Cornerstone Drive to provide a more convenient location with 24-hour access for bulk water customers.

Planting Veneta firmly in the 21st century, we have included broadband conduit as a city public improvement required for all new development, and successfully sought funding to extend broadband connectivity to the Cornerstone Business Park.

E permitting is now available to contractors enabling them to apply for and purchase all city building permits online, submit plans electronically and schedule inspections 24/7 online.

Does Veneta have a "brand?" Do we want one? We explored these and other questions regarding identity and economic development at a town hall meeting with internationally known place branding expert Bill Baker. After subsequent deliberation, public and council consensus was that a branding campaign for Veneta is premature, not to mention too expensive. We did determine that the City logo needs an update, now in progress, as well as a more user-friendly web site, soon to be unveiled. The conversation about branding will continue as the city grows and matures.

Another town hall meeting in October addressed public safety concerns previously brought before the Council. Ric Ingham, City Administrator, Sgt. Billy Halvorson, Veneta's contract sergeant, and Sgt. Carrie Carver, representing the Lane County Sheriff's Office, provided information and responded to questions regarding Veneta's contract with Lane County to provide police coverage for the city. Sgt. Carver also provided Neighborhood Watch materials and guidelines.

Public safety and community policing are top priorities for the Council, and, with the sheriff's office, we will establish a Community Policing Strategic Plan. We are fully supportive of one or more Neighborhood Watch groups for the community, and Sgt. Halvorson will answer questions and hear residents' concerns at the Fern Ridge Library at 1 pm on the last Saturday of each month. Responding to citizen inquiries, the Council has asked staff to explore alternatives to our current contract, including establishing our own police department.

Veneta loves to celebrate and we did a lot of it last year. The Fern Ridge Service Center's Harvest Festival was the biggest and most successful yet. Families flocked to the Park Board's annual Easter Egg Hunt. It rained on the Chamber's annual holiday tree lighting, but, for once, it didn't rain on the City's Light Parade, and it wasn't cold either!

Veneta Elementary and the Veneta Park Board teamed up once again to observe Earth Day/Arbor Day, and Veneta celebrated five years as a Tree City USA with a special program at the community center and a tree planting at Territorial Park.

The Veneta Community Pool had another great season. The Veneta Improvement Association initiated construction of Veneta's original swimming pool to provide a safe place for our children to learn to swim.

We're proud that swim lessons continue to serve that important purpose and, in fact, are a major source of revenue, accounting for 36% of total pool revenue in 2014.

The Pool hosted four special events this year. We partnered with Kiwanis for the Summer Solstice Party and a Family Fun Night. Both events featured games, prizes, music and food. For teens, the pool scheduled Night Waves and Night Waves II, featuring well-known DJ Barry McGuire and Xbox games on the City's 12-foot screen. The pool's third annual swim meet attracted competitors from throughout the area.

2015 will see implementation of much of last year's planning activity, including street repairs and sewer system expansion. Public safety enhancements will continue to be a major focus, including a stronger police presence in our parks and, we hope, formation of at least one Neighborhood Watch group.

ODOT'S safety improvements to Highway 126 are scheduled for 2016, and Veneta will continue to advocate for additional improvements and eventual implementation of the entire Fern Ridge Corridor Plan, including our multi-purpose path to Eugene.

An improving economy is spurring business interest in Veneta and the Fern Ridge School District's successful \$26.7 million bond measure will bring new construction dollars to the area, and major improvements to Veneta Elementary School, our partner in community events as well as the education and well-being of our children.

This year, Veneta's three-teacher second-grade team--Angie Pebworth, Corrine Messman, and Deanna Greene--were named VFW Teacher(s) of the Year by our local post and by VFW District 13 for their innovative and collaborative approach to citizenship education. That curriculum includes an annual visit to City Hall to learn about local government. This is something I personally am looking forward to this year because, believe it or not, sweet second graders see the Mayor of Veneta as a rock star.