

# City News

January 2023

## City Welcomes New & Returning Councilors

Two vacancies on the Veneta City Council have been filled—one seat by newcomer Alexa Benson and the other by two-term councilor Robbie McCoy. This will be McCoy's third term.

Benson ran for council because, as she explained, "It is my time to take more civic responsibility and work collaboratively toward positive change."

Benson's professional background includes a PhD in Nursing from UCLA, years of experience as a Nurse

Practitioner, and current President of the nonprofit Women and Girls First.

Her focus is on establishing a local Urgent Care, the revitalization of downtown, and the City's livability and walkability. "We seem to share the same vision," Benson said of her recent meeting with City staff. Benson described her vision of Veneta's downtown as having more of a variety of sit-down restaurants. "If we build something we love

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## Make a New Year's Resolution to Take the Veneta Community Survey!

We want to hear directly from residents about livability in Veneta—what's working, and what could work better in the survey. You will be asked to grade your experiences living in the City of Veneta in terms of quality of life, parks and recreation, economic development, community needs, city services, and more.

"This is our effort to deliver on what residents requested in the previous Communications Survey," said Management Analyst Cole Haselip.

In the Communications Survey, which took place in August 2022, respondents stated that they want to "provide input

on issues they care about," and indicated that they would like to be "very involved."

These responses point to an increase in the number of people wishing to provide their input on City planning and policies. In the previous year, respondents indicated that they want to be very involved, compared with respondents in the 2022 survey indicating they want to be very involved.

"The new 2023 Community Survey is the first of its kind in Veneta. In March, the Council will get a report on the

(See "Survey" on page 2)

## Winter Festivities Wrap Up

Veneta's annual holiday festivities attracted more attendance than in previous years, and organizers say they couldn't be happier!

Kicking off the month was the Christmas Tree Lighting at Veneta Elementary School, followed by the Light Parade on December 8<sup>th</sup>. "I think every year it gets a little better," said Robbie McCoy, organizer of the Light Parade for the Veneta Fern Ridge Chamber of Commerce. "We extended it one more block, and the skate park was packed with people."

There were 35 float registrations this year, which was on par with previous years. But the community participation is what really went up, said McCoy, so they were glad they extended the route.

Winners of the Light Parade are as follows: 1<sup>st</sup> Place: Veneta Veterinary Hospital, 2<sup>nd</sup> Place: Salon on 5<sup>th</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> Place: Velcro Home School, Best Animals: Grateful Grooming, Judges' Choice: David Sears. Congratulations!

Winners of the Veneta Fern Ridge Chamber of Commerce's Tour of Lights (held December 20<sup>th</sup> through 25<sup>th</sup>) are as follows: Business 1<sup>st</sup> Place Joy Cart, Residence 1<sup>st</sup> Place: Let it Glow on Sheffler Rd., 2<sup>nd</sup> Place: Melinda's Masterpiece on Hunter Ave., 3<sup>rd</sup> Place: Warner Home on Sheffler Rd. Congratulations!

Another event that took place was the 30<sup>th</sup> annual S.A.N.T.A Project on December 10<sup>th</sup> at Veneta Elementary School. 431 local children were served, each receiving two gifts, a book, and stuffed animal.

(See "Winter" on page 2)



### CIVIC CALENDAR January 2023

All meetings held at City Hall unless otherwise noted

|    |   |  |
|----|---|--|
| 2  | Closed in observance of New Year's Day  | Closed   |
| 4  | Park Board Meeting  | Cancelled  |
| 9  | City Council Meeting, Urban Renewal Agency meeting - immediately following  | 2:30 p.m.  |
| 10 | Planning Commission Meeting   | 6:30 p.m.  |
| 11 | Economic Development Committee Meeting  | 2:00 p.m.  |
| 16 | Martin Luther King Jr. Day  |  Closed |
| 19 | Municipal Court   | 8:30 a.m.  |
| 23 | Executive Session (5:00 p.m.) followed by City Council Meeting for State of the City Address from Mayor Keith Weiss; Council Training Session - immediately following | 6:00 p.m.  |
| 27 | Business Assistance Committee Meeting   | 9:00 a.m.  |
| 27 | City Council Work Session   | 3:00 p.m.  |

## Councilors

and cherish, then other people will come," she said.

"There's a lot of room to grow."

Benson's experiences traveling the globe (she's been to at least 150 countries) has lent her a greater understanding and appreciation of the country where she's from. "My desire to see the world and appreciate other cultures helped me see and value what we have here in the United States," said Benson, a Los Angeles native.

A local business owner for twenty-three years, Robbie McCoy says she is looking forward to new opportunities for growth as she commits to another four years serving on

council. Changes include, but are not limited to, representing the City of Veneta on the Lane Council of Governments Board of Directors. "I'm excited. I like to learn," stated McCoy.

Her responsibilities will not end there. She will continue serving as Chamber of Commerce liaison, on the Neighborhood Watch Group, and as a board member for West Lane Charter School.

Benson and McCoy will be sworn in as councilors at the regular city council meeting on Monday, January 9th, 2023 at 2:30 p.m.

## Survey

data which will be used to inform the 2023 budget, long-term goals, and City planning and policies," Haselip explained.

As with previous surveys, each resident is being called upon to provide their valuable feedback. As the City's outreach efforts continue to expand, the number of survey respondents is steadily increasing, but most residents still do not have their voices heard. Of the total population, the previous Communications Survey obtained feedback from

just 3.31% of Veneta residents.

Respondents who spend just five to ten minutes completing the survey are automatically entered into a drawing to win a \$50 Shop Veneta Gift Card. The survey can be completed online, by mail, or by dropping the completed survey off at City Hall located at 88184 8th Street. Residents are asked to complete the survey no later than January 31, 2023.

The City of Veneta thanks you for your helpful input!

## Winter

S.A.N.T.A. President Monica Crawford said that this year "things have gone up in price," pointing to increased participation after a two-year pandemic related slump. Crawford said that volunteers served an average of just 300 children per year in 2020 and 2021. She said "things were pretty much back to normal" this year, with parents filing into the school gym for Christmas goods for their chil-

dren. 75-80 volunteers supported the S.A.N.T.A. Project this year. A portion of those volunteers are from the Free Souls Motorcycle Club, otherwise known as "Santa's Elves." Crawford wants to thank all the local volunteers, businesses, schools, and individuals who supported another successful S.A.N.T.A Project this year—30 years and counting!

## What is Code Enforcement?

The City's code enforcement program was established to ensure compliance with the City's municipal code governing issues such as garbage accumulation, abandoned vehicles, graffiti, and high grass. Enforcing the City municipal codes is an essential function to accomplish community goals such as public health, safety, environmental stewardship, and maintaining property values.

The Code Enforcement Officer is a member of the City's Community Development Department and works to resolve or abate hundreds of cases each year and is focused on education of the community regarding these issues.

### Complaint Driven Code Enforcement

The City of Veneta's Code Enforcement primarily operates on a complaint driven model. Once a resident files a written complaint with the City, staff will then investigate the problem. If, indeed, a property owner is in violation of the City's municipal code, then City staff writes the property owner a letter educating them on the City's code and requesting they address their violation within a set timeframe. The City's goal is to achieve voluntary compliance. Property owners who do not address their violation may be fined by the City of Veneta. In cases where property owners receive a fine and still fail to address their violation, the City may hire a contractor to address the code violation and charge the property owner for the contracted service by placing a lien upon their home. Liens are collected when a property owner sells their home. Residents will find copies of the City's complaint form by visiting Veneta City Hall or the City website at <https://www.venetaoregon.gov/codecompliance>

### How does Code Enforcement Help the City?

The City's Code Enforcement Officer makes the City a safer and more enjoyable place to live for all of Veneta's community members. When the Code Enforcement Officer writes letters reminding people to cut their high grass during the summer they help protect everyone's homes from the dangers of wildfire. When they ask people not to put their basketball hoops on the public sidewalk they make it wheelchair accessible. When they ask someone not to leave garbage in their front yard the neighborhood becomes more pleasant to other residents as well as prospective home buyers. With cooperation from Veneta residents, code enforcement helps make Veneta a healthier and nicer place to live.