

# City News

The Newsletter of the  
City of Veneta

88184 Eighth Street  
PO Box 458  
Veneta, OR 97487  
(541) 935-2191

<http://www.ci.veneta.or.us/>

## City Council adjusts water rate increase

Expecting that an upcoming study focused on the water pipeline currently under construction will necessitate fee increases, the Veneta City Council has decided to bundle two previously scheduled water rate fee increases together this month.

"The City Council felt it was financially advantageous in the short and long term to implement both 3 percent rate increases, originally scheduled, for January and July 2013," says Mayor Sandra Larson. "The scheduled increases are a result of a 2008 rate analysis that recommended semi-annual increases in order to maintain adequate operational revenues considering that there had only been two rate increases in the previ-

ous 16 years. The current increase will raise the monthly base rate by 66 cents and the cost of purchasing up to 5,000 gallons by 14 cents per 1,000 gallons."

In 2007, Oregon Association of Water Utilities conducted a water rate study for Veneta, which indicated that then-current rates were too low and increases were necessary. In December 2008, the City Council voted to raise the rate 6 percent every year through 2013, in two semi-annual 3 percent steps.

Because water rates had not risen since early 2000, Veneta had to "play catch-up" when implementing the 2008 hikes, officials say.

Anticipating that a new

water rate analysis due this spring — which will study the costs of purchasing water from the Eugene Water and Electric Board (EWEB) — will require a further rate hike, the City Council voted on December 17, 2012 to fold the planned 2013 increases into a single increase.

"The City is currently conducting a new water utility rate analysis that will incorporate the costs associated with constructing and financing the water pipeline project as well as the projected cost of purchasing wholesale water from EWEB," says Larson.

As information about the new pipeline rate analysis becomes available, the City will post updates on its website:

<http://ci.veneta.or.us/>

## City utility assistance program changes

Since 2007, the City of Veneta has administered a Reduced Water and Sewer Fee Program in order to assist low income residents. Residents are required to submit an application every year and provide documentation verifying their income level.

In the past, Lane Council of Governments (LCOG) processed the City's applications in conjunction with the Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP). Beginning in 2013, City staff will be determining eligibility and verifying income. The program, eligibility criteria and the levels of assistance have not changed.

"The City Council remains committed to providing assistance to those households who need it," says City Administrator Ric Ingham. "We are now taking the lead in processing the information instead of having LCOG assistance with the program"

Applications, available at City Hall, should be returned to City Hall or mailed to: PO Box 458, Veneta, OR 97487, Attn: Ann Frydendall. They are also available online at <http://ci.veneta.or.us/>

## City storm water drainage fee rises slightly

For the second time since the City established a stormwater master plan in 2004, drainage fees will go up. In December, the Veneta City Council voted to adjust storm water fees to account for rising maintenance costs. Fees will rise 10 percent for all customers, or .20 per month for residential users and .60 for commercial users.

"Because of City residents' and property owners' efforts to maintain the free flowing of stormwater through our drainage sys-

tem, by properly disposing of leaves, storm debris, grass clipping and other heavy material, we've been able to keep costs down," says City Administrator Ric Ingham. "With their support and continued assistance we hope to continue to keep costs down in the future."

In 2004, the fees were set at \$1.95 and \$5.95 for residential and commercial users respectively. In 2007 the fees went to \$2.00 and \$6.00 respectively. With the new adjustment,

monthly stormwater fees have risen approximately .25 over the 8.5 years of the master plan.

"Our costs and equipment have gone up," says Ingham, noting that the City recently purchased a Vactor truck to clean out storm water basins, while labor costs and the price of materials such as storm drains have also risen. "It's important to implement a small increase now in order to avoid a proportionally larger increase in the future."

## ***ODOT seeks funds for Highway 126 spot improvements***

Last year, Fern Ridge residents attended a series of open house meetings to help identify key problems and potential solutions regarding transportation along Highway 126. This month, a local agency will hold a public meeting as it determines whether or not to fund a project centered on short term solutions.

The Lane Area Commission on Transportation (Lane ACT) will recommend whether the OR126: Highway 126W Spot Improvements project will receive funding from the 2015-2018 cycle of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), Oregon's four year transportation capital improvement program. City officials say Lane ACT should make its decision on February 13. If the county-wide committee signs off on the plan, it will go before the Oregon Transportation Commission for final adoption and appropriation.

In the long term, the Highway 126 Fern Ridge Corridor Plan identified a four-lane highway with a separated multi-use path as the locally desired solution to the identified corridor deficiencies.

But with a projected cost of over 100 million dollars, a complete Highway 126 rebuild is a ways off. Until planning and environmental work on the four lane highway

option gets underway, the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) has submitted an interim plan to secure state funding for improvements that can be carried out soon.

"Initially, the City took the lead in securing funding for the project," says Veneta City Administrator Ric Ingham, adding that Congressman Peter DeFazio acquired funding for the Fern Ridge Corridor Plan. "We are excited to see ODOT advance the 126 Spot Improvement project to the STIP process; we hope Lane ACT can prioritize the project in order for us to receive funding for those improvements during this STIP funding cycle."

The spot improvements plan developed by ODOT identifies low cost, near term solutions — such as paving improvements, intersection improvements, turn lanes, sidewalks and bus stop improvements — to safety and operational deficiencies along

the Highway 126 corridor between Veneta and Eugene.

"These short term improvements were identified in the Highway 126 Fern Ridge Corridor Plan as an alternative to mitigate these deficiencies until funding can be identified for a road widening project," according to the ODOT project application.

### **HWY 126 and Multi-Use Path STIP Hearings**

Lane ACT will hold public hearings on the OR126: Highway 126W Spot Improvements project and the HWY126 Fern Ridge Southern Route Multi-Use Path on January 9, 2013. The meeting starts at 5:30 pm in the McLane meeting room of the ODOT offices at 644 A Street in Springfield. Members of the public will have 3 minutes to speak and can submit more detailed written comments at the meeting. Agenda materials are available online at [www.LaneACT.org](http://www.LaneACT.org)

Fern Ridge area residents or stakeholders who want more information on the process can contact Veneta City Administrator Ric Ingham at (541) 935-2191.

## ***Veneta takes the lead in multi-use bicycle path planning***

Though dedicated riders are known to make the journey via long, circuitous routes or sometimes even by braving high-speed commuters on Highway 126, bicycling between Veneta and Eugene is not an easy thing to do. That could change, if a proposed bike path between the cities receives state funding.

In addition to the Highway 126 Spot Improvement plan currently under consideration, the Lane Area Commission on Transportation (Lane ACT) is scheduled to consider approving Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Enhancement funds to design a multi-use path in the right-of-way of existing county roads in order to provide an alternative route for cyclists between the cities. After holding hearings on January 9, Lane ACT is expected to make a decision on February 13.

The proposed project includes federally mandated environmental analysis, planning and preliminary design of the so-called Highway 126 Southern Route Multi-Use Path between Veneta and Eugene and carries a projected price tag of \$175,000. The path, roughly paralleling Highway 126 between Huston Road and Greenhill Road, would be built primarily within Lane County's right-of ways along K.R. Neilson Road, Cantrell Road, Central Road, and Perkins Road.

The City of Veneta has been out front in making the path a reality. Rules currently governing the STIP program state that a local entity must take lead on such projects and provide 10 percent match funds. Because Lane County wasn't in a position to lead, says City Administrator Ric Ingham, the City of Veneta felt it was important to step in, in order to maintain momentum and see the project move forward.

"The City felt it was important enough to take the lead in submitting the multi-use path's STIP application as a first step in implementing the proposed Fern Ridge Corridor Plan improvements," says Ingham.

The proposed 8-mile multi-use path is one option identified in the Highway 126 Fern Ridge Corridor Plan to "provide a safe and accessible bike and pedestrian transportation alternative to using OR 126W." The route would provide the only direct east-west bicycle and pedestrian connection other than Highway 126 and would connect to the extensive Eugene Fern Ridge Bike Trail at its trail-head on Green Hill Road.

According to the application, "the multi-use path will serve to enhance and diversify the area's transportation network and promote alternative modes of transportation to popular destinations."