

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/>

Public Safety: Crime and Statistics

By Mayor Sandra Larson

Violent crime statistics misreported

A number of residents have expressed their concerns regarding public safety in and around Veneta, most recently at the last meeting of the Veneta City Council. Some of those concerns were apparently provoked or at least exacerbated by a faulty analysis of 2012 crime statistics – published by online news forum GoLocalPDX and widely circulated through social media – which determined Veneta to be one of “5 Oregon Towns More Dangerous Than Portland.”

At the City’s request, Lane Council of Governments (LCOG) researched the FBI’s Uniform Crime Reporting Statistics violent crime data to determine the accuracy of the online contributor’s analysis, and determined that, in fact, Veneta’s violent crime rate per capita in 2012 was .61 percent, well below the 4 percent reported by GoLocalPDX, and has declined since 2008. In 2008, there were 40 violent crimes reported compared to 28 in 2012.

Fortunately, this is a trend that holds true for the state as a whole which, along with Lane County, had a 2012 violent crime rate of .25 percent.

“Comparisons are odious.”

This expression has been used since the 15th century to remind us that comparison often leads to misinformation and/or misinterpretation. According to LCOG’s Susan Soward, by ranking jurisdictions, the GoLocalPDX analysis does exactly what the FBI warns against in its guidelines for proper use of bureau statistics.

“GoLocalPDX presents a ranking of jurisdictions based on a flawed methodology and by the application of inconsistent data in terms of time period, count and/or rate,” she wrote.

Soward also noted that “one year is generally not a sufficient time period with which to identify trends facing the community and that the lower the population of a community, the more volatile the percentage per capita,” adding that “in a small town one additional violent

See Public Safety, page 3

FAQ’s at City Hall

Have you ever wondered where to find information about your city, a particular civic issue or an upcoming event in town? Did you know that the City of Veneta has a website that is full of useful facts and contact information?

You can find most information quickly by utilizing the search box in the upper right hand corner of the City website. Many queries will produce several different links to choose from.

For example if you type “code enforcement complaint form” into the search box you will get three very different choices, one for Codes & Ordinances, another for Code Enforcement and a third for Animal Control. Which one you click on, would depend on the type of information you are looking for.

Most of the City’s information and forms can be found in multiple locations and the search box is a great tool to get you to the right information quickly. The website also features several dropdown menus that organize information into helpful categories, including City Departments and Services, Your Government, Residents, Visitors and Doing Business.

See FAQ’s, page 3

CITY OF VENETA - CIVIC CALENDAR - OCTOBER 2014		
VENETA ADMINISTRATIVE CENTER - 88184 EIGHTH STREET, VENETA OREGON		
1	Veneta Historical Committee Meeting - City Hall	2:00 p.m.
1	Veneta Park Board Meeting - City Hall	4:30 p.m.
7	Joint Meeting of the Veneta City Council & Veneta Planning Commission - City Hall	5:30 p.m.
	Veneta Planning Commission Meeting - City Hall	7:30 p.m.
13	Veneta City Council Meeting - City Hall	7:00 p.m.
	Veneta Urban Renewal Agency Meeting - Immediately following City Council Meeting	
16	Municipal Court - City Hall	8:30 a.m.
27	Veneta City Council Meeting - City Hall	7:00 p.m.
29	Joint Meeting of the Veneta City Council & Veneta Planning Commission - City Hall	5:30 p.m.
31	Happy Halloween	

Veneta announces new online permitting process

The City of Veneta Building Department is pleased to announce that the City's new online permit purchasing and tracking system, called ePermitting, is up and running. Beginning in August, 2014 contractors have been able to apply for and purchase all building permits online, submit plans electronically and schedule inspections 24/7 by phone or online.

"A huge benefit of the on-line system is contractors can apply for permits outside regular business hours if they choose and without having to drive to City Hall," says Kay Bork, Veneta's Community Development Director.

Because contractors registered with the state have access to the permitting process through the internet, Bork says, in some cases simple permits can be processed in a few hours with the system. Anyone can go online to search by address to see if projects have permits.

Veneta joins a growing list of local jurisdictions offering ePermitting services statewide to provide online access to apply, pay for, and receive building permits 24/7, auto-

mated inspection scheduling by phone or computer, comprehensive permit tracking and data collection, as well as electronic plan review. The system even includes a mobile app for inspectors.

State surcharge already collected with permits pay for the new system, so no additional charges are required. 30 cities throughout Oregon are using the new system, including several in Lane County.

In 2003 (SB 713), and in 2007 (HB 2405), the Oregon Legislature adopted bills that created a voluntary statewide ePermitting system to improve contractor access to building permits and services. The ePermitting system builds upon the benefits of statewide code standards by providing a uniform platform for online, streamlined access to building services.

Veneta is working with the Oregon Building Codes Division to provide local training to contractors on how to use the ePermitting system. For more information please contact Bork at 541-935-2191, ext. 314.

Fall ditch maintenance and leaf pickup schedule

After an extra-long, extra-hot summer, fall rains have finally come to the Willamette Valley. City officials want to remind residents that right now is the best time to clean up drainage ditches in preparation for another rain-soaked winter. According to Veneta's Municipal Code, residents must keep drainage ditches and waterways on their land free of any flow-blocking debris or plant growth.

Maintenance should ensure that water flows through ditches, so residents should never plug ditches and drainages or allow brush to inhibit flows.

"The flow (of water) should not be impeded in any way," says Public Works Director Kyle Schauer, adding that it is common for uninformed city residents to put leaves or grass clippings in the low spots of drainage ditches. When drainage ditches get blocked it causes them to overflow, leading to flooding and major damage to roads, landscaping and nearby houses.

Special care should be taken when removing vegeta-

tion. Residents should be aware that some properties contain protected wetlands. If you have any questions about the wetlands you can call Associate Planner Lisa Garbett at 541-935-2191 for more information.

Instead of raking fall leaves into drainage ditches, you can bag them and put them out for weekly pickup. The City of Veneta will begin picking up bagged leaves left at curbside starting October 1, 2014. Leaves will be picked up on Tuesday and Thursday of each week through the end of January 2015. Bags must contain leaves only, no garbage or other yard debris. Bags must be tied shut.

As an alternative you may place leaves in your Yard Debris Roll Cart provided by Sanipac or use them for mulch or compost for gardens and flowerbeds.

Citizens are asked to help reduce flooding by not raking leaves into gutters or storm drains. Depositing leaves or other debris in a drainage way or street is a violation of Veneta Municipal Code Chapter 13.15.010.

Grant awards conceptual design of multi-use path

Veneta students who commute to schools in Elmira on foot or by bike and City residents out for a stroll may soon have a new, safer route along Territorial Highway and into Elmira, thanks in part to a recently awarded grant from the HEAL Cities Campaign for the Northwest, a partnership of the League of Oregon Cities and the Oregon Public Health Institute.

The City of Veneta has been awarded \$7,000 to help fund the cost, approximate \$20,000, of a conceptual design and feasibility study for a new multi-use path from Veneta to Elmira. The study, to be completed over the next six months, will determine the next steps to take to build the path and what it will cost.

The projected route will span from just north of the West Lane Shopping Center to the south side of Suttle

Rd. The City of Veneta owns the majority of the land for the proposed path.

The project addresses the need – identified by the City Council during a goal setting session – for the City to develop multi-use paths for the betterment of the community. This need was identified because all schools in the Fern Ridge School District, other than Veneta Elementary School, are located in Elmira, Oregon.

Because the majority of Veneta residents live south of Highway 126, residents and students utilizing the shoulder of Territorial highway – currently the only bicycle or pedestrian access between the two communities – face a substantial safety risk.

"This path will improve the safety of our children and provide an outlet for our residents" See Path, bottom of page 3

Public Safety: the City takes public safety seriously

crime could double the percent per capita.”

However . . .

This is not to say that the City dismisses the concerns of our residents. We are not.

Public safety is one of our most important responsibilities. The City’s contract with the Lane County Sheriff’s Office (LCSO) to provide law enforcement services accounts for most of our public safety budget of \$826,900 and over half of our property taxes go to support this expenditure.

The contract provides for a 1/3 full-time-equivalent sergeant and four deputies who provide coverage 20 hours per day, seven days each week. We also pay a proportionate share of dispatch and records costs. There is no question that it would be desirable to contract for an additional deputy, as suggested by some residents. The question is, how do we pay for it?

Community policing is a council goal and an on-going focus for the City, but it is admittedly a work in progress, requiring collaboration with LCSO. Our contract sergeant and deputies are not City employees.

So, why not form our own police force? Again, how do we pay for it? A few years ago, the City of Creswell determined that start-up costs would be \$1.2 million and the annual cost for a chief, sergeant and three deputies would be at least \$1 million. Creswell currently contracts with LCSO as well.

What’s next?

It’s important to recognize that even though we all have legitimate concerns, Veneta’s law enforcement contract provides better coverage to Veneta residents than LCSO can provide to our surrounding rural residents. (A source of unfortunate confusion and frustration for our neighbors outside the city limits.)

The City will soon announce a public meeting to include council, City staff and LCSO staff to discuss the community’s concerns, as well as to explore pragmatic solutions so that citizens feel not only safer but more connected to one another, to local law enforcement and to city government. Please stay tuned.

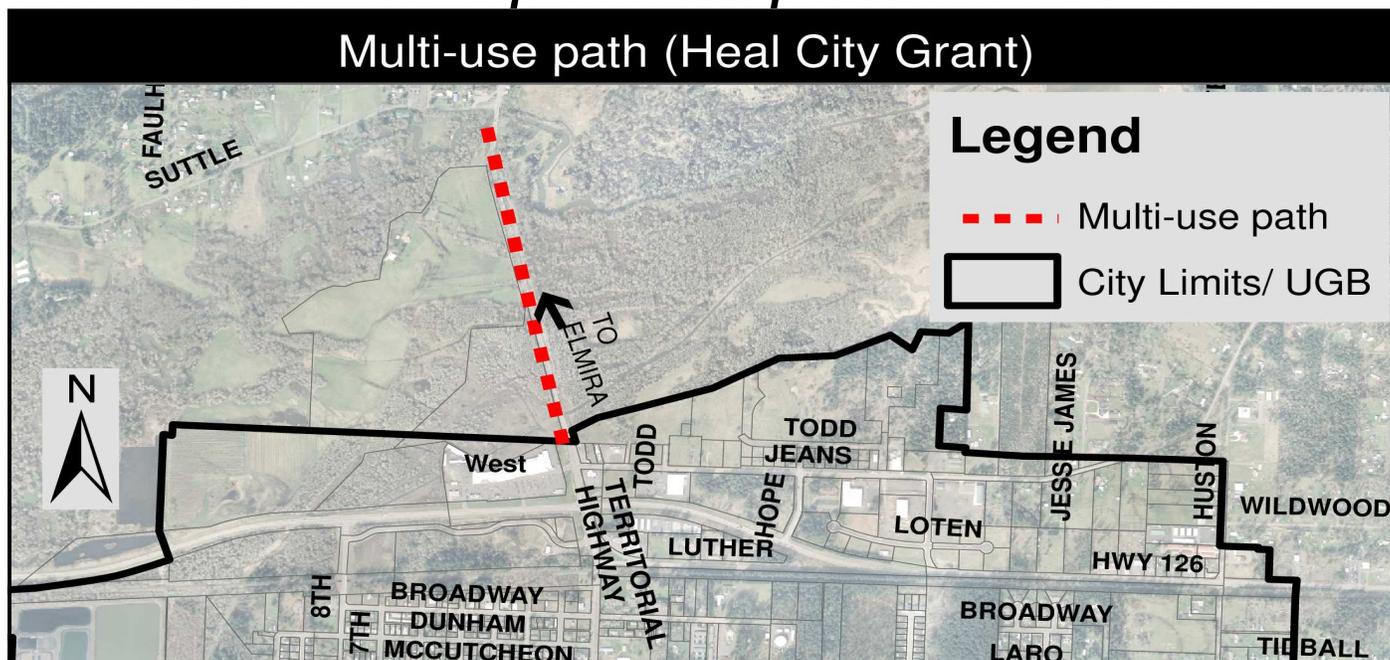
Email Mayor Larson at slarson@ci.veneta.or.us.

FAQ’s: Most City information can be found online

“Residents can find all sorts of info on our website – like zoning information for their property, when a building permit is needed, code complaint forms, City Council meeting dates, times, agendas and pool hours,” says Commu-

nity Development Director Kay Bork, adding that the website also features a community calendar. If you are unable to find what you are looking for online, the staff at City Hall is always eager to help at 541-935-2191.

Path: Grant will help address pedestrian concerns



(continued from bottom of page 2) to maintain healthy, active lifestyles,” says Veneta Management Analyst Katie Babits.

The proposed path will also allow residents of unincor-

porated outlying communities to gain access to a grocery store, the Veneta Downtown Farmers’ Market, pharmacies, and medical care offices, Veneta Community Pool and access to all of Veneta’s City parks.

veneta park board presents

Tree City Celebration

**5-Year Tree City USA and Tree
Planting Celebration**

Saturday, October 11th

10:00 am - 1:00 pm

**Veneta Community Center &
Territorial Park**

-  **Welcome & Arborist Presentation 10AM
at Veneta Community Center**
-  **Westside Gardeners Club, Fern Ridge Library
and City information Booths**
-  **Refreshments & Free Raffle**
-  **Noon Volunteer Tree Planting at
Territorial Park**



TREE CITY USA

Information/City of Veneta: 541-935-2191