

# City News

February 2023

## New Councilors Spring into Action

At the January 9<sup>th</sup> City Council meeting two councilors were sworn in by Veneta Municipal Judge Alan Leiman. The councilors were each elected to serve a four-year term. Veneta's legislative body consists of four council members, as well as a mayor. The City Council receives public input, adopts policies, and guides the City's decision-making.

Councilor Robbie McCoy is a returning councilor and Councilor Alexa Benson is new to the council this year. They have both been spending time getting comfortable in their new roles - including in their respective liaison roles. Councilor McCoy will continue

serving as a liaison to the Veneta Fern Ridge Chamber of Commerce and Councilor Benson will serve as Park Board liaison.

McCoy is taking on an additional responsibility serving as Council President. She was nominated by Councilor Pat Coy and elected by her fellow councilors. The position was previously held for more than a decade by former councilor Thomas Cotter.

The council president works closely with the mayor. They often provide support in ways that ensure that council meetings run smoothly. Additionally,

(See "Councilors" on page 2)

## Now is the Time to Spay and Neuter Cats

Did you know that since 2014 the City of Veneta has been offering no-cost spay and neuter of feral and stray cats in an attempt to reduce the cat population. Veneta Friends of Ferals reports that a total of 541 cats have been serviced since 2014, reducing the local cat population by an estimated 87,000 kittens.

"It's an easy solution to an overpopulation problem," explained Teresa Warrick, founder of the local "Please Don't Litter" campaign.

Warrick has a background in animal control, previous to her role as the Code Enforcement Officer for the City. Warrick saw a community need and she set out to fill it. The program kicked off in 2014 thanks to

a PetSmart Charities Grant which Warrick said gave the City means to spay and neuter for two years. The City Council voted to continue investing in the program.

The program has worked in partnership with Veneta Veterinary Hospital for the past 8 years and we thank them for their continued support.

"We are just trying to slow the population down," Warrick said. "With spring around the corner, residents should be mindful of the overpopulation of cats in the Veneta area."

Eligible cats must be located within city limits,

(See "Feral Cats" on page 2)

## Budget Highlights

In October 2022 the City of Veneta welcomed Tim Gaines as the new Finance Director. Gaines brings nineteen years of experience in the field. Sixteen of those years were spent as the Finance Director for the City of Harrisburg.

"I'm glad to be in Veneta. We work really well as a team," Gaines said of his time so far with the City. Each year the City adopts a fiscal year budget that reflects a conservative balance of revenues and expenditures. Gaines explained that now, having just passed the mid-year mark, the City's budget is "doing well and performing how it is expected to." Generally, revenues and expenditures hover around 50% of the total budget level at this point in the fiscal year. However, the results can vary depending on a variety of factors. Currently, the City's expenditures are sitting at about 32% and the revenues are sitting at roughly 57%. Gaines added that personnel costs are below 50%, which is good.

(See "Budget" on page 2)

CIVIC CALENDAR February 2023		
All meetings held at City Hall unless otherwise noted		
1	Park Board Meeting	4:30 p.m.
7	Planning Commission Meeting	6:30 p.m.
8	Economic Development Committee Meeting	2:00 p.m.
13	City Council Meeting	6:00 p.m.
14	Valentines Day	Open
16	Municipal Court	8:30 a.m.
20	Presidents' Day	Closed
24	Business Assistance Committee Meeting	10:00 a.m.
	City Council Work Session	5:00 p.m.
27	Joint City Council and Local Contract Review Board Special Session	6:15 p.m.

## Councilors continued

Councilor McCoy will represent Veneta on the Lane Council of Governments (LCOG). McCoy has already been talking with other regional representatives and had a meeting with LCOG's Executive Director Brenda Wilson.

At the swearing in on January 9<sup>th</sup>, the Councilors received a warm reception from city staff as well as from Councilors Pat Coy, Maureen Wright, and Mayor

Keith Weiss. Both Councilor Benson and McCoy are honored to serve on the City Council, and they are ready and excited to spring into action.

The next meeting for the Veneta City Council will be held Monday, February 13<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. at City Hall located at 88184 8th St. in Veneta. For more information visit [www.venetaoregon.gov](http://www.venetaoregon.gov).

## Feral Cats continued

aged eight weeks or older, and weigh at least two pounds. Warrick pointed out that female cats are capable of producing up to three or four litters per season. And unlike dogs, cats are free roaming, which contributes to the problem. After performing the surgeries, cats receive an "ear tip" marking them as spayed or neutered.

## Budget continued

The 2022-23 budget is delivering a variety of high priority projects including parks, street improvements, economic development activities, the Bolton Hill Sports Complex, and the Middle Mile project, among other items. The Middle Mile project is fully funded by the American Rescue Plan Act. "The goal is to get broadband coverage to all of our residents," said Gaines.

The budget process is governed by state budget

If you or someone you know has a stray or feral cat or kittens and needs information on spay or neuter, or you would like to volunteer for Friends of Ferals, please contact Teresa Warrick at 541-935-2191 or visit [www.venetaoregon.gov](http://www.venetaoregon.gov).



laws, city ordinances, and city charter. Every year, a public hearing is held to gather community input regarding the fiscal year budget. January through May is when budget preparation takes place, with review and adoption occurring in June.

To learn more about the 2022-23 Fiscal Year Budget, please visit [www.venetaoregon.gov](http://www.venetaoregon.gov) and locate the "Key Documents Directory" under the "Government" tab.

## Code Enforcement Perspectives: Complaint-driven vs Pro-active

Municipal codes exist to ensure the safety and comfort of all city residents.

By ensuring compliance with municipal codes, a city aims to protect both the health of individuals and of the environment. Voluntary compliance is clearly the ideal, but sometimes a city must take action to abate a code violation after several notices have failed to address the issue.

Currently, the City of Veneta relies on a complaint-driven model for code enforcement. With this model, code enforcement occurs only following a written complaint, usually by a citizen. Complaints are treated confidentially as allowed by law. Following an investigation by the City, if it's determined that there is a code violation, the involved resident(s) are asked to correct the violation within a given time frame.

Some common code violations include: illegally parked cars on the street, illegally parked recreational vehicles, basketball hoops left on the sidewalk, and tall grass in the summertime. In some cases of non-compliance, fines and penalties may apply if written notices go ignored. However, the City acknowledges that not all violations have the same level of severity. As a result, there are priority cases

that the City acts on without complaints such as those which present an imminent threat to the health and safety of residents and/or the environment, building code violations, failure to permit, land use violations, and repeat complaints.

A pro-active model of code enforcement would not require a written complaint. City employees who observe potential code violations during the course of their work would notify the code enforcement officer. Additionally, the code enforcement officer would visit neighborhoods and identify code violations to follow-up on.

The primary benefit to the pro-active model is that common violations are addressed equally throughout the city. A downside is that it takes more staff time to implement.

# State OF THE City

Presented by: Mayor Keith Weiss

It is hard to believe it is already 2023. I have prepared this State of the City report to help give you an idea of our accomplishments for the past year, and a glimpse of what we are working on for this coming year.

For the most part, our lives are returning to our normal routines as COVID-19 is stubbornly waning. That means more people are going back to work at their job locations and our children are finally attending school in an environment that is important for their education, development, and their overall growth as they interact with their teachers and classmates on a daily basis.

Here at the City, we are hard at work doing our best to make the lives of our residents less stressful and as safe as we can. For the most part, we are able to accomplish that without much fanfare or notice. We feel we are doing our job well if we do not hear about it, and we receive an occasional appreciative note. We strive to make your residential life feel like you are part of a welcoming community.

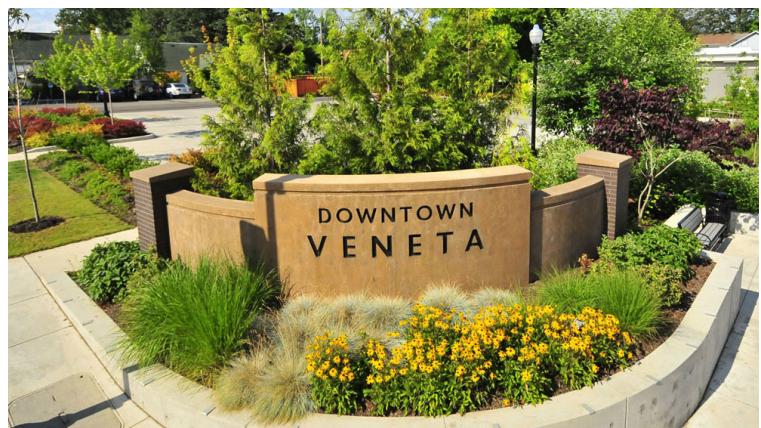
One of the ways we accomplish that is through our volunteers. We have several groups that consistently volunteer to make the lives of our residents a little better. These groups include, but are not limited to, the Veneta Fern Ridge Chamber of Commerce, Mid Lane Cares programs at the Fern Ridge Service Center, the Kiwanis Club, the local Veterans group, the Scouts, the Fern Ridge Library volunteers, the Lane Fire Authority volunteers, the Fern Ridge Area Unhoused Group and the Faith Based organizations in and about our City. I encourage all residents to find out more about what these great groups do for our community and if you can find time, help out with volunteering. It is a good feeling to give back to your community.

As most of you are aware, the cost of buying and maintaining goods has gone up dramatically. I am sure you have noticed that everything from buying a

hamburger to a new car has affected our budgets. Here at the City, we are feeling the pinch, and are doing our best to spend wisely. However, just like you with your household budget, we have to make sure we do what we have to do to keep things going on an even keel, and also continue to save for future projects. In that vein, you will see a small increase in your water and sewer bill for 2023. We have some needed improvements to our sewer plant that will be required within the next couple of years, so we have to start preparing for that now.

One thing we are working on to improve your city experience is improving our communication platforms to make it easier for you to know what we are doing, and to let us know about your needs. You will be receiving surveys from us for you to let us know more about how you would like to communicate with us. Please take time to complete these and we will publish the results as soon as we can. Additionally, we will launch a re-designed City website by late February that will allow you to sign up for email or text notices of City happenings. We feel an informed public better understands what we are trying to accomplish in the city and can, if they wish, contribute to those accomplishments.

On the next few pages you can read about those notable accomplishments from 2022.



# NOTABLE ACCOMPLISHMENTS FROM 2022

## CITY FINANCES

The City again was successful in obtaining a clean opinion from our auditors on our 2020/2021 Financial Statement and Report and I am happy to report that we received the Government Finance Officers Association Budget Award for the 9th consecutive year.

## BROADBAND

It seems like every year I announce to you that high-speed affordable broadband options are coming to town, then it seems like something always comes up to delay it. I am happy to report that we have made significant progress in 2022 and by this time next year, I am confident it will be available for your consideration.



## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The City has been working to bring our city development codes up to date and to help make it easier for developers to build in our city. For instance, the council passed an ordinance that allows detached or attached homes to be clustered around a common area. That kind of development has been popular in other areas. It is commonly called Cottage Housing.

The developer who is building homes at the Madrone Ridge site continues to build and sell beautiful homes this year and we have had discussions with other builders for more residential development in the near future.



## PUBLIC WORKS

Some of the hardest working folks we employ at the City are the guys of the Public Works Department. They keep our city clean, safe, and beautiful in all kinds of weather. When you drive by and see them working, give them a friendly wave. In addition to the landscaping work they do, they are also the ones that keep our pool up and running for your enjoyment during the summer. They also keep our sewer, water, and storm water systems running like clockwork.

This year they helped prepare for and install new bathrooms at the City Park. They made sure our street curbs were painted while the preventive Pavement Preservation Project sealed up cracks and added an overlay of asphalt on most of our streets. In the long run it keeps our streets safe, reliable, and actually saves money overall.



## CODE ENFORCEMENT

Our Lane County Sheriff's Office deputies led by Sergeant Tim Ware are a great bunch. They care about our community and do their best to help anyone in any situation.

I would like to repeat my message from last year concerning code enforcement in our City. "In response from our citizens, the City is planning to put more of a priority in enforcing the city codes that are in effect. The City will be looking at issues such as, but not limited to, animal control, abandoned vehicles and vehicles parked on front yards and as a reminder, RVs need a permit to park on the street. In addition, the City has recently followed the lead of other cities across the country in passing an ordinance requiring owner's registration of abandoned, vacant or distressed properties. This was done to urge property owners to keep their properties maintained and productive."

# NOTABLE ACCOMPLISHMENTS FROM 2022

## PARKS AND RECREATION

Coming out of restrictions from COVID-19 it was a challenge to get the pool up and running for the year. Staffing was a major issue as we needed to hire and train several new lifeguards. It took a yeoman's effort from all involved to make it happen; but they did it, and we made a lot of people happy. Hopefully we can expand on what we did and make it even better for this coming summer.

A proposal was made to surplus a couple of small parks that did not seem to get much use and to use the money for improvements to other existing parks or the development of a new off-leash dog park in the City. The residents expressed their displeasure with those plans and made it clear to the City Council that they wanted to keep the two smaller parks. The Council heard their voices and voted to keep the parks as they are.

We do plan to go ahead with a new off-leash dog park, thanks in part to the generous offer from the Port of Coos Bay to allow us to use some of their railroad right of way for that purpose. You might have noticed that some clearing has begun between the railroad and Brooker Drive, just west of Territorial. The city hopes to have the land fenced, gated and ready for use by late Summer.



Future site of the Dog Park

The City is working with the Territorial Sports Program board members to draft a design for major improvements to the Bolton Hill Sports Complex. Keep an eye out for a big community outreach effort soon to get ideas from our residents. Our former Community Development Director Lisa Garbett said "Balancing the community's wants with the community's ability to collectively pay for the new facility will be a tough, but prudent challenge." I think we all understand what she was saying.

## COMMUNITY CENTER

Our current Community Center is becoming out of date and is in need of repairs. It is a lovely place next to City Park for our residents to rent for celebrations and events. It was decided by Council that in the long run, we would be better off to replace it than to spend the money to remodel it. We are currently in the design phase. Once that is completed, we will apply for grants to help with the financing.

## COUNCIL CHANGES FOR 2023

I am so happy to honor our long-time city councilor, Thomas Cotter. He decided to retire after 24 years on the council. We wish him the best and thank him for his many years of dedicated service to our community. In case you do not know, the Mayor and Councilors are volunteers in this city. They volunteer to do the work because they care about your needs. We will miss Councilor Cotter.

In the general election, we had three people run for two openings for City Councilor. One of the openings was because the term for Councilor Robbie McCoy had expired. Fortunately for the city, she ran for another term. We also had an opening because of the aforementioned retirement of Thomas Cotter. Robbie was the top vote-getter by a sizeable margin and the person with the second most votes in the election was Alexa Benson.

Please join me in congratulating both of them. Robbie and Alexa were sworn in at the first meeting in January 2023. We look forward to continued service from Councilor McCoy and to be working with our new Councilor Alexa Benson.



ROBBIE MCCOY



ALEXA BENSON

# NOTABLE ACCOMPLISHMENTS FROM 2022 continued

## EVENTS

We were able to go back to some of the old traditions for events that had to be altered because of COVID-19. This year we were able to have the traditional Easter Egg hunt at the Veneta Elementary School. Hundreds of children were so excited to have their pictures taken with the Easter Bunny. They yelled and screamed with joy as they filled their baskets with the goodies they found!

In May we celebrated the City's 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with the Veneta Celebration Run. Nearly 90 participants of all ages showed up on a typical rainy Oregon morning to run or walk the 5k course through the city with neighbors cheering them on as they ran past their homes. Nearly \$5,000 dollars was raised for the Park Board's park beautification efforts. This year, the Veneta Celebration Run will happen on Sunday, September 24<sup>th</sup> mark your calendars and start walking to get ready!



This year the City was excited to announce that it had received an award from the National Night Out organization, which oversees the annual event of the same name focused on public safety awareness and community-building. I would like to thank our City Staff, the Lane Fire Authority, Neighborhood Watch, the Oregon Department of Forestry, and the Lane County Sheriff's Office, for their help and participation in this event. Also, thanks go to Sanipac for providing free hot dogs for all of the attendees.

The Christmas tree lighting and the Annual Light Parade were better than ever this year. There may have been more people at those events than the total population of Veneta. We were so excited to host people from all over to show off our city with these fun events. I'd like to say thank you to our friends at the Veneta Fern Ridge Chamber of Commerce for putting on another wonderful parade, and thank you to our LCSO deputies and their law enforcement friends from around Lane County who showed up to help make it a safe event.

## GOING FORWARD INTO 2023

In 2023, we are planning to move ahead with advocating for the Highway 126 expansion project. The environmental study is almost complete. The next big step is funding. Passage of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act should give a big lift over that hurdle.

We are continuing to work with our partners, Lane County and ODOT, to build a path between the Veneta Elementary School and the Fern Ridge Schools in Elmira. A lot of surveys and engineering and environmental analysis has happened over the last two years. Four bridges are needed to cross the wetlands. This year, the County will apply to the State for a \$2.8 million grant for full design and partial construction of the path from Suttle Road in Elmira to the ODFW parking lot on the east side of Territorial Highway. They plan to apply next year for the remaining construction to the Ray's Shopping Center area with an estimated cost of \$6.8 million. It is a huge project and our community needs it to happen for the safety of our students. Keep in mind that all Veneta stu-

dents beyond elementary level, travel to Elmira for school. Those who walk or bike must use the shoulder of Territorial to get there and back.

In addition, as I mentioned earlier, we will continue working on the Community Center project and plan to have an off-leash dog park open for our furry friends. It will be so nice when it all comes to fruition.

As your Mayor, I know I speak for the whole City Council when I thank you for your support for what we do here on a daily basis, to hopefully enhance the lives of each of you and your families. After all, that is truly what we are here for. So, once again, I am honored to declare, "The State of this beautiful City of Veneta is GREAT"!

Respectfully,  
Keith Weiss

