

City News

January 2025

Farewell Mayor Weiss

Fond farewells to Mayor Keith Weiss filled the room at the December 9th City Council meeting as he led his last City Council meeting as Veneta's mayor before he retired. Lane Area Commission on Transportation (Lane ACT) Chair and Creswell City Councilor Shelly Clark sent a heartfelt video message of appreciation for working closely with Mayor Weiss, who served as her Vice-Chair on the Lane ACT. Together, they toured local projects and traveled to Salem to successfully advocate for funding

those projects. Additional remarks of appreciation came from Vidal Francis, the Oregon Department of Transportation's Region 2 Area 5 Manager, who emphasized how the Mayor's leadership elevated Lane ACT.

(See "Weiss" on page 3)



Veneta Celebrates the Season

Veneta's annual Tree Lighting on Thursday, December 5th at Veneta Elementary was a festive gathering that attracted over 500 spectators celebrating the season with music, community spirit, and LOTS of hot chocolate!

School choirs from Veneta Elementary and Fern Ridge Middle School filled the air with joyful holiday songs, setting the perfect tone for the evening. Mayor-elect Robbie McCoy addressed the crowd and led the countdown to light the 25-foot tree, which sparkled with countless lights

and decorations, creating a breathtaking sight.

Fern Ridge Kiwanis members played an integral role in the celebration, serving over 475 people with more than 22 gallons of hot chocolate, warming the hearts of everyone present. Barry MacGuire provided sound equipment and festive Christmas music to enhance the atmosphere.

Santa Claus made a grand entrance aboard Lane Fire Authority's vintage Mac firetruck, de-

(See "Events" on page 3)

Taking Pride in Your Sidewalks

As outlined in Veneta Municipal Code (VMC) Chapter 12.15, the responsibility for repairing and maintaining sidewalks rests with the property owner. Failure to maintain sidewalks in a safe condition is considered negligence, and the property owner may be held liable for any injuries caused by lack of maintenance.

Additionally, the landscaped areas between the curb and the sidewalk, including required street trees, are also the property owner's responsibility.

Key Responsibilities:

- Sidewalk Maintenance:** Property owners must repair and maintain all sidewalks bordering their property as specified in VMC 12.15.060.
- Debris Removal:** Homeowners and tenants are responsible for clearing debris such as leaves, branches, weeds, and grass from sidewalks. Regular inspections are encouraged to

(See "Sidewalks" on page 3)

CIVIC CALENDAR

January 2025

All meetings held at City of Veneta, 88184 8th St, unless otherwise noted



1	New Year's Day	2025	Closed
7	Planning Commission Meeting	6:30 p.m.	
8	Economic Development Committee Meeting	2:00 p.m.	
	Park Board Meeting	4:30 p.m.	
13	City Council Meeting, followed by Urban Renewal Agency Meeting	6:30 p.m.	
16	Municipal Court	8:30 a.m.	
20	Martin Luther King Jr. Day	MLK DAY	Closed
27	City Council Meeting	6:30 p.m.	
31	Business Assistance Committee Meeting	9:00 a.m.	

Department Updates

ADMINISTRATION

- In December, City Administrator Matt Michel visited Elmira High's journalism class to talk with them about how a city works and help them with ideas for their "If I Were Mayor..." video contest entries. Their teacher, Ms. Nelson has made the statewide Oregon Mayors' Association contest a class project. That's pretty cool! Plus, the top three winners in Veneta each get a prize!
- Portland State University's Population Research Center sent the City a "Preliminary 2024 Population Estimates" letter for a population estimate. The State of Oregon uses the City's certified population number for allocating state funds like the alcohol sales tax revenues. Over the last 4 years Veneta's estimated population has increased by 45 to 5,259 with a current estimate of 2,032 housing units, a 2.7% vacancy rate, and an average household size of 2.64 people.
- In 2025 the City will change all city-related email addresses that end in @ci.veneta.or.us to @venetaoregon.gov as part of a cybersecurity upgrade. We'll sound the horn when that change is scheduled to happen so that you can update your saved city email addresses.



PUBLIC WORKS

- In December the City experienced a couple of water main breaks caused by underground bores for internet fiber. As most of us know, it's not easy tracing a simple household water leak from where the water is to where the break in the water line happened. Imagine how much harder it is to find the line break when it's somewhere underground beneath pavement or concrete. A Tip of the Hat to our Public Works team for responding after work hours to locate, excavate, secure, repair, test, and cover the water line. Meanwhile, we'll bill the undergrounding company for the damage they caused to city infrastructure and remind them to follow the depth requirements for public utilities in the rights-of-way.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- At December's Veneta Fern Ridge Chamber of Commerce quarterly luncheon at Our Daily Bread the City's marketing consultant Altar Media provided to local businesses a short presentation of an Economic Identity brand to familiarize them with the new marketing materials and provide information on how they can incorporate the brand into their own marketing efforts. The Economic Identity initiative is in response to the Veneta business community's ask to have a unifying brand to connect local businesses to the Veneta community. The City will partner with the Veneta Fern Ridge Chamber of Commerce to help businesses understand how to use the brand to encourage people to shop local.



PUBLIC SAFETY

- A note from Sgt. Parker: "Over the last several months, Veneta commercial properties have seemingly become target of burglaries/theft. With some hard work and a little luck, deputies established probable cause for a search warrant. The warrant was executed and the suspect was arrested."
- A quick note that there are MED-Project Mail-Back pouches available at City Hall for disposing of expired or unused pharmaceuticals through the U.S. Mail. No limit to the number of mail-back pouches you can get. Just ask Traci at the front desk for some drug-take-back mailers.



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- FEMA received the City's Pre-Implementation Compliance Measure selection to ensure the National Flood Insurance Program's compliance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The City will use a Permit-by-Permit process of whether the ESA is triggered for development in floodplain area after December 1, 2024. The City's required to begin collecting data using a FEMA reporting tool on January 31, 2025. We'll then first report the data to FEMA beginning January 31, 2026, on an annual basis.



Weiss cont...

He thanked Mayor Weiss for his invaluable role on Lane ACT, especially given the committee's challenges, and fondly described him as a friend, counselor, and a genuinely kind and authentic individual.

West Lane County Commissioner Ryan Ceniga shared a personal story about Mayor Weiss calling him promptly after he started as a Lane County Commissioner, and praised the Mayor's steadfast advocacy for Veneta. Park Board Chair Craig Soderberg expressed his deep appreciation for Mayor Weiss's dedication to Veneta, not-

ing his absence would be greatly felt. Tressa Miller of Lane Fire Authority also spoke, noting Mayor Weiss's enthusiastic commitment as "Mayor Bunny" at the Easter Egg Hunt since taking office in 2019. The evening concluded with gifts and a framed picture from the City honoring Mayor Weiss's significant contributions to Veneta.



Events cont...

lighting children with a chance to meet him and share their holiday wishes.

The 21st Annual Veneta Light Parade happened a week later on December 12th with Mayor Weiss as Grand Marshal and a record entry of 60 floats joined by a herd of lighted llamas and the Harrisburg High School Marching Band that received the Judges' Choice award. Light Parade award winners were:

- * First Place: Lane Electric Co-op's Gingerbread House-apalooza! SO. MANY. LIGHTS!
- * Second Place: Ag West Farm Credit's Farmyard Fun!
- * Third Place: Veneta Veterinary Hospital's "Polar Express" complete with a LIVE conductor!

- * Honorable Mention: Santa's Tractor-trailer with Santa aboard and driven by David Sears

A big THANK YOU to the Veneta Fern Ridge Chamber of Commerce for producing another world class small-town event!

On Saturday, December 14th Mid Lane Cares' Sharing Among Neighbors Toy Appeal (S.A.N.T.A.) Project provided 400 children in the area with new books, toys, and other gifts. All of S.A.N.T.A.'s amazing volunteers and elves were eagerly waiting at the Veneta Elementary gym to give away new gifts for Fern Ridge & Crow-Applegate-Lorane school district families' children.

Sidewalks cont...

prevent injuries and reduce liability risks.

Prohibited Actions: Blowing leaves or debris into the street violates Veneta Municipal Code.

Taking pride in your sidewalks not only ensures community safety but also enhances the enjoyment of shared spaces. Keep them safe, clean, and well-maintained!



Volunteers Needed

The Love Project and Mid Lane Cares have several opportunities for volunteers. If you are interested in helping out, please contact Deanna at the Fern Ridge Service Center 541-935-4555.

Fern Ridge Community Services provides free dinners every Sunday and needs 10 volunteers each Sunday to



cook, serve, and clean up. Their long-term volunteers are burning out, and they may have to reduce their services.

You can sign up at: <https://www.fernridgecommunityservices.com/> click on the volunteer box under "Community Dinners".



Rate Adjustment Reminder:

Beginning with your January 2025 Utility billing you will see an increase of 2% on your water base and water use and a 3% on your sewer base fees.



Safe Parking in Veneta

The City of Veneta urges drivers to park responsibly to ensure safety and accessibility for everyone in residential areas. Improper parking can create significant inconveniences and safety hazards.

Avoid blocking mailboxes, as this can disrupt mail delivery. If a mail carrier cannot safely access a mailbox, they may skip delivery for the day. Repeated violations could result in the permanent suspension of mail service to that address. Maintaining clear access ensures timely and efficient delivery.

Parking in front of a fire hydrant is not only illegal but also dangerous. Fire hydrants are essential for emergency response, providing firefighters with access to critical water supplies. Obstructing a hydrant could delay efforts to control a

fire, endangering lives and property. Always leave at least 10 feet of space on either side of hydrants.

Additionally, never park in bike lanes. These lanes are designated for cyclists, and parking in the bike lane forces riders into traffic, creating hazardous situations for both cyclists and drivers.

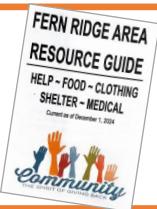
Oregon law (ORS 811.550) prohibits stopping, parking, or leaving a vehicle in restricted areas, whether you are inside the vehicle or not. Violations are considered Class D traffic offenses, carrying penalties that may include fines.

Being mindful of where you park helps keep Veneta safe and accessible for residents and visitors alike. For more information, contact the City of Veneta Code Enforcement Department at 88184 8th Street or by calling 541-935-2191.



There is a Fern Ridge Resource Guide.

The guide is maintained by F.R.A.U.G. (Fern Ridge Advocates for the Unhoused Group). The guide provides contact information for help with food, clothing, shelter, and medical services and general help. Copies are available at City Hall and the Fern Ridge Service Center.



Public Safety Report - October 2024

Incident Type	Calls			Cases		
	Calls	Prior Year	5-Year Average	Cases	Prior Year	5-Year Average
Property (Thefts, Criminal Mischief, Trespass, Fraud)	30	36	32	10	13	11
Person (Assaults, Menacing, Harassments)	25	29	25	1	7	5
Public Order (Disorderly Subject, Citizen Contact)	87	68	61	0	3	1
Individual Welfare (Welfare Checks/OD, Missing Persons)	32	20	18	2	3	1
Vehicle (DUII, DWS, Illegal Parking, Traffic Hazard)	15	20	19	1	3	2
Offense Against State (Drug, Warrants, Local City Ord)	3	18	5	3	5	4
Civil (Civil Service, Eviction Process)	3	5	7	0	0	0
Neighborhood Watch	0	1	0	0	0	0
Traffic Stops	17	21	0	0	21	0
Total	212	218	167	17	55	24

State of the City

2025

Mayor Keith Weiss

I have prepared this annual message to you for the past 6 years. This one is the hardest for me to prepare because I have decided to step away from my duties as your mayor to spend more time with my wife Jo Ann and our family as we progress into our golden years. My wife and I recently celebrated our 55th wedding anniversary.

You have elected a new Mayor, Robbie McCoy, whom I congratulate. I have worked alongside Robbie on different committees, council and assignments for about 16 years and am confident she will take over for me seamlessly and will represent you admirably for years to come. The only word of caution I have is she

picked on me for the 16 years we have served together, and with me being gone, you could be next. (LOL). Good Luck Robbie!

As I leave the position of Mayor, the city continues to prosper and is in the middle of a strong growth spurt. New homes seem to be popping up all around town. The area north of Jeans Road is set to start developing soon with plans for mixed housing, commercial development and a new park.



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

It seems like every year I inform you that we are about to make improvements to Hwy 126 and to install a path that would reach from Veneta to Elmira for school children to use as well as bike riders and other pedestrians. As I have learned, and you have probably guessed, the wheels of government turn slowly. Yes, we have made significant progress on both of these fronts, but finding funding is difficult at this time. ODOT continues to apply for grant funding for improvements to Hwy 126. They will hear in January if they were successful with their latest application.

Along that front, I would like to use my involvement as Vice-Chair of LaneACT (Lane Area Commission on Transportation), to let you know of a major issue that ODOT is facing as they go forward. The tax money they receive to do their maintenance work has gone down substantially in the past few years. ODOT has to maintain the same miles of road but with considerably less money. That really hurts because as you know, labor and material costs have increased dramatically. The majority of state money that ODOT receives comes from the tax on gasoline and diesel and vehicle fees. Unfortunately, those taxes, both state and federal are generating less money each year. I will name a few

of the many reasons why:

- Electric Vehicles, which are becoming more and more popular each year, do not use gas, so they do not pay gas tax.
- More and more people work from home, and so consequently they drive less.
- Gasoline and Diesel engines are significantly more fuel efficient now.
- More folks are using public transportation, are walking, or riding bicycles to work and to shop.

You can see where I am going. All good for the environment, but less money to maintain and improve our roads, which are still needed. So, how does it affect us here in Veneta?

What should we do about it? The part I forgot to mention is that the County and the City get less money to maintain the roads also. We have to work hard to keep up with less. It is obvious in order to solve this problem we need to adopt new revenue sources such as paying for the miles you drive, rather than tax gas and diesel. It is above my paygrade to figure all this out, but I think it is up to leaders like me to inform you of the growing problem.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

As I mentioned above, the city is in the middle of a growth spurt. Also, Eugene is continuing its growth toward the West and that will mean more and more folks will be looking for places to live in our area. With that in mind, the city has 400-500 homes either approved or in the process through the Planning Commission. I am sure you will be joining me in welcoming all of our new residents to Veneta and will show them what a great place it is to live and raise a family.

PUBLIC WORKS

The Public Works Department continues to make our city shine. They do so much more work than most residents realize. For instance, they hang and water the Chamber of Commerce flower baskets on Broadway and also post the Veteran Flags. They maintain the pool and all the parks which will, of course, include the new Pickleball courts and the long awaited off-leash Dog Park (The Bark and Whistle), that is scheduled to open in the spring. What a big job that they do with pizzazz. They also make sure the city streets are maintained and of course ensure we have plenty of good clean water and an efficient wastewater treatment facility. On that note, you probably noticed your rates went up a little bit this year, mostly because our water treatment plant is nearing its capacity, and we have to save up money to expand it in the next few years.

ADMINISTRATIVE

I would be remiss if I didn't mention that we lost a very valuable member of our team, our Community Development Director, Matt Laird, who passed away suddenly in late August. It has been hard on all of us, but fortunately, we do have a staff that steps up to challenges and will continue to do the things we do to keep moving on.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Our beloved Sargent Ware of the Lane County Sheriff's Office retired recently, and he was replaced by Sargent Parker. Sargent Parker has taken the job running and we welcome him to our team.

Unfortunately, on the negative side, the city is going through an uptick in property theft as are most of the towns around us. Several of our residents who own commercial businesses and property developers have informed the city of recent losses that have occurred. Our law enforcement team is aware of the problem and is working on it. The criminals are smart though. It is hard to corral them. I wish the bad guys

would use their smarts to do more constructive work for their communities.

For law enforcement, the city contracts with the Lane County Sheriff's Office for the services of a $\frac{1}{2}$ time Sargent and 4 full time Deputies to be assigned permanently to our city. The council would like to be able to increase those numbers, but again we are up against the old money bugaboo. **We currently spend right at 50% of the tax money we receive to run the entire city, on law enforcement.** On a positive note, the City Council has recently approved a request from staff to increase the law enforcement budget enough to cover making our Sargent a dedicated 40-hour full time member to Veneta. We believe with this change we can make strides to lessen the property theft problem and continue to make Veneta a safe place to live.

EVENTS

I have already bored you with a lot of words here, so I am going to make this a shorter speech this year. As in years past the staff has worked hand in hand with organizations like the Chamber of Commerce, the Kiwanis and others to put on very successful events throughout the entire year. In March we had a Easter Egg Hunt attended by hundreds of excited children. In August we celebrated our First Responders with the annual National Night Out which seems to be growing each year and was a lot of fun. September brought us the truly exciting Harvest Festival and Kruse-in. Hundreds of folks had a blast there. October brought us the Veneta Haunts which our residents seem to love. In December the lighting of the city Christmas Tree and arrival of Santa was special to the many children of our city. The event year will be capped off with the ever-growing Light Parade lead by a proud Mayor, me.

I would like to personally thank all of the people who worked so hard to make our events so special. Our residents really look forward to enjoying those events each year.

THANKS

It has been such an HONOR to serve as your mayor these past 6 years. I could not have served without the help and support of so many of you. I will be forever grateful.

As I sign off for the last time, I wish you all well, and with immense pride, I would like to declare that: **THE STATE OF THE CITY OF VENETA IS GREAT!**