Vernonia Citizens Show Support for City Staff

Approximately 100 citizens turned out at the Vernonia City Hall on Monday May 21, to show support for City Administrator M.R. "Dick" Kline and his staff. Eight individuals, including elected officials, city staff members, and citizens took the microphone to express their support for Kline, and talk about their view of his job performance.

The rally was organized by citizens who were concerned that Kline has been facing unwarranted criticism from the local press, and had become the subject of misleading statements made by individuals. City staff has been under fire as well and has been working under significant distress for weeks.

The rally was kicked off by Mayor Sally Harrison, who welcomed the crowd and introduced the speakers. Among the speakers in support of Kline were County Commissioner Tony Hyde, Jim Tierney from Community Action Team (CAT), Parks Committee member Casey Mitchell, City Councilor Shirlee Daughtry, Planning Commission Chair Dan Brown and Community Learning Center Director Jessica Jones. Tierney, who works closely with many city officials and staff in his position with CAT, stated "Dick Kline is the best city Administrator I have ever worked with." Citizens held signs that read "We Love Vernonia," "Vernonian's for a Bright Future," and "Dick Kline – We Support You." A petition was circulated and signed, expressing support for city staff.

Kline has been criticized in the local media recently for his inability to give satisfactory answers

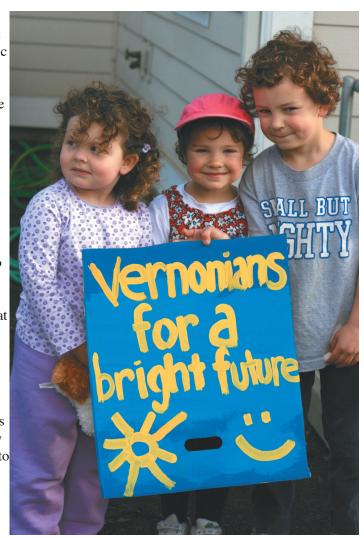
to questions about the city's financial situation. In addition, local media sources have complained that the city is not responding to their requests for public records, and that the media is being over—charged for the preparation of those requested documents.

Kline has expressed dissatisfaction with the current situation, and in his "ability to effectively perform my duties," due to these distractions. In meetings with city officials he has stated that he may not stay in Vernonia. This prompted a quick response from rally organizers, who instigated the gathering on short notice through emails, phone calls, face-to-face conversations and flyers.

Kline came to Vernonia last year as interim City Manager, and was hired permanently two months later, after City Administrator Robin Bassett left the position. Kline inherited a budget that was facing shortfalls, and several community projects that were under-funded, including the wastewater treatment facility, the Community Learning Center, and the Bicycle/Pedestrian sidewalk project on OA Hill.

When asked later to comment on Kline's performance as City Administrator, Mayor Sally Harrison said, "The decision to hire Dick Kline was the best decision I've ever made. I can go in at any time and get answers to my questions. He is a joy to work with."

Kline, in the midst of preparing the city budget for next year, has not announced any decisions about his future in Vernonia.















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