

Kline Resigns as City Administrator ICC May Assist In Meeting Oregon Flood Codes

By Scott Laird

Vernonia City Administrator M. R. "Dick" Kline has submitted his resignation to the City Council. Kline is being retained by the city on a contractual basis and will oversee city finances, the budget and the Public Works Department.

Kline made his resignation formal to the City Council in a letter dated January 7, 2008. Kline stated in his letter, "I want to reiterate that I am voluntarily resigning my position due to the dire financial circumstances that the City of Vernonia faces." Kline later continued, "I fully expect to continue assisting the City Council and Interim City Administrator Aldie Howard after this resignation becomes effective so that the smoothest possible transition can be accomplished during this very difficult time."

"It is with regret that I accept Dick Kline's resignation," said Mayor Sally Harrison. "He has done so much for us. His greatest gift has been his insistence on planning and looking ahead. He has shown me that planning is essential to progress."

The resignation of Kline, which took effect on January 18, allows the city to reclaim his salary and benefit expense, and combine that with the contract fees paid to Howard as Planning Director. This would give the city two full time experienced Administrators on staff. The City Council is negotiating the new contracts for both Howard and Kline.

"We knew in the last budget cycle that finances would be tight," said Kline in a recent interview. "The shortage of over \$500,000 in the Community Development Fund that was uncovered this year compounded the problem. And the flood was the straw that broke the camels back. Every bit of discretionary funds need to be spent on flood recovery."

Interim City Administrator

(Continued from page 1)

"I truly understand the "Vernonia Ethic" that everyone is talking about right now. That toughness, that resiliency," said Howard. "I look forward to working in this capacity for the city."

Howard, who has been working in the community of Vernonia as Planning Director since May of 2006, has a Masters Degree in Public Administration and brings a diverse background and a wealth of experience, from both public and private sectors, to his new position.

"I have spent a lot of time in public service, and learned early on to surround myself with the brightest people I can find. I like working with people who think outside the box, and I'm not afraid to admit when I don't have the answers," says Howard. "I am definitely here to help Vernonia."

Howard will mainly be responsible for coordinating flood recovery and day to day operations of the city and staff. Kline is continuing in his role as financial officer, overseeing the city budget and Public Works Department.

ICC May Assist In Meeting Oregon Flood Codes

If a home or business was damaged by flooding during the severe storms, wind, mudslides, landslides and flooding of December, 1-17, the home or business owner may be required to meet certain community building requirements to reduce future flood damage before the home or business may be repaired or rebuilt.

To help cover the costs of meeting those requirements, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) managed National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) includes Increased Cost of Compliance (ICC) coverage for all new and renewed Standard Flood Insurance Policies.

Federal Emergency Management Agency officials have been impressed by the recovery efforts undertaken by Oregonians. "The people of this state just rolled up their sleeves, got right in there and started tearing out damage and fixing their houses," said FEMA's Glen R. Sachtleben, federal coordinating officer. "For the first time in my experience, we actually had to send people out to ask the residents to slow down - they were at risk of missing out on ICC because they were moving too fast."

Flood insurance policyholders in high-risk areas, also known as special flood hazard areas, may qualify for up to \$30,000 to help pay costs to bring their home or business into compliance with the community's floodplain ordinance. All communities in Oregon that have a FEMA flood hazard map participate in the NFIP.

There are four options to comply with a community's floodplain management ordinance and help reduce future flood damage. The home or building owner, in consultation with local permitting officials, may decide which of these options is best.

The four options are:

1. Elevation. This raises your home or business to or above the flood elevation level adopted by your community.
2. Relocation. This moves your home or business out of harm's way.
3. Demolition. This tears down and removes flood-damaged buildings
4. Flood proofing. This option is available primarily for non-residential buildings. It involves making a building watertight through a combination of adjustments or additions of features to the building that reduces the potential for flood damage.

An ICC claim is adjusted separately from the original flood damage claim filed under a Standard Flood Insurance Policy. An ICC claim may be filed only if a community determines a home or business has been substantially damaged or repetitively damaged by flooding. This determination is made when application is made for a building permit from the local jurisdiction to begin repairing a home or business.

A Conversation with County Commissioner Tony Hyde

By Scott Laird

The Flood of 2007 brought not only damage and despair to residents of Vernonia and Columbia County but also a sense of hope and an opportunity for renewal. Many good changes occurred in Vernonia and the surrounding communities after the Flood of '96, and there remains the opportunity for that to happen again. This flood will be expensive. The recovery will take time and an ongoing effort by many volunteers and staff. It will be a big job that will take real leadership. One of the community leaders during the first days and then weeks of the flood recovery was Vernonia resident and County Commissioner Tony Hyde. Hyde was the mayor of Vernonia in 1996 and gained a lot of experience in leading a community through the recovery process. Hyde's leadership and experience proved invaluable in the early stages of recovery in December, 2007, and his ongoing connections will be helpful as the community navigates the process and attempts to secure resources. I sat down with Tony Hyde and discussed how he sees Vernonia moving through recovery and into another post-flood period. Following are excerpts from that conversation.

"Governor Ted Kulongoski has been totally engaged in our situation from the very beginning. I was at a conference in Portland the day of the flood that the Governor was also attending. I was following news of the flooding and thinking I needed to head back when I found out the roads were closed, and it was too late. One of the Governor's staff called me on my cell phone and said the Governor wanted to meet with me. Governor Kulongoski asked what they could do to help. He helped arrange for the Air National Guard to come in and help with rescues. He was here in town the second day knocking on doors and touring people's homes. He made resources available and got things done. He even made the unusual move early on of waiving policy and protocol steps in order to expedite help.

"The Governor formed a recovery Cabinet that met daily at first, then weekly and now biweekly. It includes all the department heads in Salem which is just about unheard of. It's made up of the heads of DEQ, ODOT, the Departments of Education, Fish and Wildlife, State Lands, Economic Development, Employment, Veterans Services - about fifty state leaders. The Attorney General is there, everyone is involved. I

am on this cabinet, and these are some real heavy hitters. They are all working and involved in Columbia County recovery. We are getting a lot of assistance in looking at how to deal with not just our current problem and our recovery but in how to deal with this issue for the future."

"Bringing in the State Fire Marshal Overhead Team was a good idea. They brought a high level of experience. They helped us maximize our resources and allowed us to keep our focus. And they knew when their job was done, and it was time to pack up. I know they learned a lot by being here. It was a good experience for them."

"I want to give praise to School Superintendent Ken Cox and the Vernonia School Board. They have stayed very engaged and have had the weight of some big decisions on their shoulders. Our schools should be our number one cause right now. I hate to see people second guessing their decisions. We should be supporting them for being proactive and getting things done. Ken Cox has been working extremely hard; he is not sleeping. He has been available twenty-four/seven to try to find good solutions for this community."

"We are so far ahead of the game at this point. We

had people who had been through this before and who stepped right up and got our recovery going. I was so happy to see people like Jim and Kim Tierney and Dan Brown walk into the room that first day. When the folks from FEMA arrived, they were amazed at how organized this community was. One FEMA rep said he had never seen anything like it in over thirty years of working on disaster recovery."

"Everyone is working to expedite the recovery process. FEMA is very eager to please here in Columbia County. I am on the Regional Advisory Committee for FEMA's Region 10 that acts as an advisory board. But we need to remember that FEMA is not going to fix us 100%. There is no silver bullet. Recovery is going to be incremental. We will need to be creative and vigilant. But I'm confident that our community will get there and be better prepared than ever."

"We are going to need to assemble outside help. The resources that will be available are going to be very competitive. They are going to be stretched thin. We need to be smart about how we move forward. Let's not invest our recovery money unwisely."