

# CityNews...

## City Council February 4, 2008

### Police Present Concerns...

During Topics from the Floor, Council heard concerns from Vernonia Police Sergeant Mike Kay and Officer Mike Conner concerning restrictions placed on officer overtime in a letter from Interim City Administrator Aldie Howard and Mayor Sally Harrison. Howard was requesting that any overtime by officers be approved by him prior to being granted. The officers expressed concerns that this restricts their ability to respond in a timely manner and could put both citizens and officers at risk while awaiting approval to respond to an urgent call.

### Emergency Housing Approved...

Council approved an ordinance to allow Temporary Emergency Housing in a general commercial zone, specifically on the empty lots between Weed Avenue and Rose Avenue. It is proposed that approximately eighteen FEMA provided manufactured homes will be placed on the site.

### Council Adopts Job Description for City Administrator Position...

Council was presented with a complete job description for the position of City Administrator. According to Dick Kline who prepared the description, and who was serving as City Administrator at the time the description was written, the city has been operating without a comprehensive description for this position. The new description spells out the functions, knowledge/abilities/skills, and qualifications of the position. After a discussion that noted

the “vagueness” of the qualifications that are required, it was agreed by the council that the broad scope of the position calls for allowing the city to consider a range of potential applicants when attempting to fill the position. Council adopted the new job description.

### Sports Equipment Storage Container Approved...

Council approved a recommendation from the city’s Parks Committee to allow the Vernonia Boosters to place a storage container for equipment at Spencer Field. The placement is to be reviewed in six months.

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### EMS States Concerns...

During Topics from the Floor, members of both Vernonia Fire Department and the Vernonia Ambulance Association expressed concerns about restrictions placed on the Vernonia Police Department that hinder their ability to respond in support of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) personnel. EMS protocol requires them to wait until the scene is deemed safe by law enforcement on certain types of calls. Calls in the Vernonia area outside of city limits are handled by County Sheriffs which can mean a long wait time. In the past Vernonia officers have responded outside their response area when it has been deemed necessary. The city now requires this type of response to be approved by the City Administrator causing what EMS personnel consider delays that

could be dangerous for citizens and first responders.

### Economic Development Committee Becomes Official...

Council gave final approval for the creation for a new Economic Development Committee.

### Contracts for Interim City Administrator and Temporary Finance Director Approved...

Council agreed to terms of contracts with Interim City Administrator Aldie Howard and with M.R. “Dick” Kline as Finance Director. Howard will receive \$6,000 per month and work at least forty hours per week. Kline will receive \$4,000 per month and also be required to work at least forty hours per week. Kline’s contract was scheduled to expire on February 28, 2008. Howard’s contract will run through June 30, 2008. Neither will receive any benefits from the city.

### Action on Community Learning Center Tabled...

Council heard concerns from members of the Vernonia Community Learning Center (VCLC) committee members during topics from the floor about extended use by the Columbia County Flood Relief of the VCLC building and the loss of programs there. The Council also received a recommendation from the VCLC committee addressing these concerns. Council decided to table any decision about extending the lease for the building facility with the Columbia County Flood Relief and requested staff to convene a meeting with the two groups to try to reach a mutual agreement.

## From Our Elected Officials

### By Vernonia Mayor Sally Harrison

To my Friends and Neighbors,

The date is February 21, 2008 – eighty days since the “Flood of 07”. Eighty very long days when you are dealing with a wrecked home, insurance companies, mortgage holders, FEMA, SBA, raising, moving, cleaning, and still trying hard to have a semblance of a life.

But on the flip side –it’s only been eighty days since the flood and look at all we have accomplished! Even with all the bureaucratic hoops that must be jumped through, all the information needed, decisions to make, and the turbulence produced, we are marching together toward our goal of normalization. I am so proud to be counted among the citizens of Vernonia.

We not only are seeking a normal life but a better life. There are some very important projects in the works. And believe me everyone is working hard everyday to see that we are successful.

First, seeing to it that everyone gets their homes lifted that need it and buying out those that need it. If you have questions or need information about that, you need to go to the Learning Center. That’s where I go and have never been disappointed.

Second, the School District with some assistance from the City is coming up with long range, flood-proof solutions for the schools. No easy task. I’m hoping Vernonia comes together and supports the schools’ efforts. Good schools are the

cornerstone of a great community.

Lastly, we have wonderfully innovative prospects for Vernonia sewer problems thanks to a working Public Works Committee. The ball is rolling, engineers are engaged, DEQ is on board, and I’m really enthusiastic about the prospects. As this project goes forward, I’ll keep you updated. I will say that the solution we are looking at may remove the lagoons.

Then there are the long range plans for reducing the amount of flood water through different kinds of mitigation. Bridges have been mentioned as has a dam of Rock Creek or other kinds of impoundments to contain the water and clear the rivers for free flow.

This brings me to an ongoing concern: storm water control. The City has contracted with Civil Engineer Dale Merrell to do not only a rate study for the city’s utilities but form a plan for storm water control. I’m very excited about the prospects.

Of course how we will pay for these improvements becomes a major concern. LID’S (Local Improvement Districts) seem the most advantageous for then it’s the ones who need the work done that pay for it.

Patience has never been one of my long suits, but believe me, we all need to practice that virtue. We want to do things right the first time and be proud of the outcome. When all is said and done, we want to be the community that others look to as an example of how to handle a disaster.

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