

Vernonia City Council Candidates Questionnaires

By Scott Laird

Vernonia's Voice sent the following Questions to the three Candidates for City Council: Kevin Hudson, Randy Parrow and Mike Seager. the following are their responses to our questions.

Question 1: What do you think we should do about our wastewater treatment facility situation?

Kevin Hudson: With phase 1 complete, as I understand it the flood of 2007 took the proposed phase 2 off the table due to FEMA requirements. As a result we need a new proposal for phase 2 and it must comply with both FEMA and DEQ regulations. This is a challenge to be sure, but as I see it the real problem is not how to fix the treatment facility, but how to pay for it. Unfortunately rate increases are imminent and anyone thinking otherwise is not being realistic. If elected I will leave no stone unturned to see that every dollar is spent as frugally as possible. I will fight voraciously to soften the financial blow to this community and utilize every resource to see that we get an efficient and compliant treatment facility.

Randy Parrow: What we should do about our wastewater treatment facility situation I think is better answered in two parts. A) I believe in the 1980's DEQ regulations required us to make improvements to the existing lagoons/systems, which caused us to borrow capital for improvements. Then DEQ changed the rules and we borrowed more to keep up with DEQ regulations and incurred more debt. What direction do we take on this current situation, we pay the bill; (seek forgiveness of part or the entire bill - highly unlikely), then we tell DEQ the headway we are making on the sewer systems is...we are paying the bill and can't afford anything else. As a community we cannot take on any more financial burden then what we already have incurred and will incur in the next few years. B) Then the flood...now what do we do? Good question. Do we have to move the sewer lagoons/treatment plant...can we elevate the lagoon sides more...unfortunately there is not an answer to this question at this time.

Mike Seager: The City should exhaust all resources, and seek all the grants available to help refurbish our wastewater system. This appears to becoming a large burden on our citizens. The city needs to find the best solution.

Question 2: What would you do to encourage economic development in Vernonia?

Hudson: I believe the long range solution is to create more

jobs within the community. More local jobs will eventually result in a viable percentage of our population that does not commute to the metro area every day. This will create a demand for more goods and services within the community. In order to attract more business we must first improve our core services to the community. We need to get our school system back on it's feet, beef up emergency services and public safety, expand medical services and take steps to provide a more senior-friendly environment. A diverse population will provide more opportunity for economic growth.

Parrow: To encourage economic development I think it is the City's roll to help any business that wants to locate here through the process (regulations, ordinances, etc.) as much as feasibly possible. I don't believe the City with its tight resources now can really go out and actively seek business, nor do I necessarily think that is the city's roll. For homeowners and businesses new and existing, the Planning Commission shortly after the flood event, quickly reviewed and rewrote a cluster of different building ordinances and put them into one to make the process smoother and easier to understand.

Seager: I would support new development in and around Vernonia.

Question 3: The City Council recently adopted goals for the upcoming year. What issues or concerns do you think should be the priorities of this Council?

Hudson: Hire a permanent City Administrator, Hire a permanent Chief of Police, Budget deficits, Budget deficits, Budget deficits.

Parrow: The adopted goals that I believe are a major priorities in no particular order, Flood Relief, Financial Forecasting and Planning, Water/Wastewater, and City Administration Positions (Administrator & Police Chief).

Seager: Update the wastewater system should be the number one priority, with balancing our budget to be a close second.

Question 4: This year's budget did not include funding for a fifth police officer. How do you feel about this situation?

Hudson: I am concerned. We have approved 3 subdivisions that result in the potential addition of approximately 80 homes (or 320 residents if you assume two adults and two children per household). It doesn't make sense that our city is growing and our Police force is shrinking. I would seek data such as crime statistics, calls for service, services

provided and response times and compare the data for our current Police force with four officers versus when we had five officers. I would request some input from our citizens as to what level of service they expect. I would look at utilizing equipment that will enhance department efficiency and lower daily operating costs. I would place some responsibility on the department and request proposals to become more self sufficient financially. I think the most important thing is to hire the right Chief of Police for the City of Vernonia. The person we hire for this position will set the tone for the officers to follow.

Parrow: The funding for a Fifth Police Officer I believe, is not going to be reinstated for some time, possibly a couple years. Also, we have had a real luxury of - pick up the phone, dial 911 and had an officer at our doorstep within minutes. We are probably faced with the reality real soon that the response time may not be what it has been in the past.

Seager: Police protection should be a high priority. If the police calls per officer has increased, then we should work to replace the fifth officer. If the calls per officer have gone down, then we should keep the level where it is.

Question 5: What do you think the City of Vernonia should be doing to protect itself against future flooding?

Hudson: We need to look at the possibility of an early warning system that will alert our residents to an impending flood based on water levels up river. We need infrastructure for an efficient and effective evacuation of flood plain residents before flooding occurs. We need to get our medical facility out of the flood plain. I would encourage participation in CERT and FEMA disaster preparedness training offered to citizens, business owners and City staff by our Police Department. I would assist with seeking grants to reduce the financial burden of preventive measures taken by residents and businesses for flood mitigation.

Parrow: What should the city do to protect itself from future flooding? Obviously we should mitigate our vulnerable buildings, seek methods of possible water diversion, and relocation of the lagoons/sewer treatment plant. Unfortunately this all will take very serious funds and we are not a cash rich city.

Seager: The city should work to not repair or replace dwellings without raising them out of the flood plain. New construction should not be allowed in the floodway.

DAVID HERR

Your Best Choice for Circuit Court Judge Position 3

"The St. Helens Police Association believes that Mr. Herr's longtime commitment to the community and his criminal justice experience both as a prosecutor and a defense attorney makes him a standout as the best candidate for the job. The St. Helens Police Association is happy to support and endorse Mr. Herr as the next Columbia County Circuit Court Judge."

"David is smart, professional, organized, hardworking, no-nonsense, clear-thinking and has the respect of attorneys/judges in this county. His unfailingly ethical and a straight-shooter. He has the kind of common sense that can see through a tangle of facts and legal theories and come up with an opinion, a plan, a compromise, or whatever the task requires. I cannot more highly recommend David Herr."

Jenni Jordan, Deputy D A, Columbia County

"Columbia County needs David Herr on the bench because he ... is best able to solve our docketing problem. I believe that ... David has the broadest experience and knowledge of the law. I know David Herr to be very organized and a problem solver. He is someone who can get to the crux of a problem, bring people together and reach a solution. I believe David Herr is the best qualified candidate for Columbia County Circuit Court Judge."

John N. Berg, Deputy D A, Columbia County

"I am concerned about the victims of crime. Convicted criminals should be punished based on their record, deeds and attitude, with a view towards deterring not only them, but others from future criminal conduct. A Judge's primary responsibility is to make the victims of crime whole while punishing the criminal."



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- Steve Atchison- Columbia County DA
- Martin Sells- Retired Columbia County DA
- John Berg- Columbia County Deputy DA
- Jenni Jordan-Columbia County Deputy DA
- Richard Mickelson- Senior Judge
- Charles Wardle- Municipal Court Judge
- Scott Burge- Mayor City of Scappoose
- Jerry Cole- Mayor City of Rainier
- Ralph Painter-Rainier Chief of Police

"David has the necessary attributes to be an excellent Circuit Court Judge, including common sense and compassion. He is a good listener. David is respected by the judges and attorneys in Columbia County and is well liked by his peers. I am aware of the other candidate for this position and I enthusiastically endorse David Herr as the most qualified candidate for Circuit Court Judge in Columbia County."

Stephen D. Petersen, Attorney at Law.

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