

Vernonia Airport Development Proposed

By Scott Laird

Vernonia businessman Tim Bero wants to help improve the Vernonia Airport and bring more jobs to Vernonia. His application to the Columbia County Planning Commission for a zone change on the privately held seventy-six acre property owned by Bero, was rejected by a vote of three to two on August 18. The application is now scheduled to be heard before the Columbia County Board of Commissioners on November 12 at 10:00AM, at the Columbia County Courthouse. The application has been opposed by neighbors to the airport and has become a source of controversy within the community.

Bero, who currently owns TNW Firearms, Inc., on Timber Road, requested a Comprehensive Plan amendment and a zone change from Primary Forest (PF-76) to Rural Airport Industrial (AI) and Community Service Recreation (CSR), to develop light industrial and manufacturing facilities space. The property identified in the application is located adjacent to the Vernonia Airport.

According to draft minutes from the August 18 Columbia County Planning Commission Hearing, Bero dropped his initial request to designate forty-three acres to CSR, and changed his application for six acres of development-- one acre for a building, two acres for parking, two acres for future development, and one acre for utilities. Bero is also requesting use of his property for a safety expansion of the current airport runway. Bero plans to develop a ten-unit campground on the site, which is allowable in PF-76, but will require additional permits.

The list of permitted uses specifically states that business development be airport-related, and buildings could be no greater than 3500 square feet. Adequate facilities and utility

installation will be required before permits will be issued.

Bero has consistently stated that his intention is to provide living-wage jobs for the Vernonia community, provide space for small businesses to expand and become more competitive, and help the Vernonia Airport become self-sufficient and more safe.

Bero's application has received the support of Vernonia Mayor Sally Harrison, who testified at the hearing that current industrial and business sites in the Vernonia area have been deemed unusable because of recent flooding, and feels that rezoning of this property would bring needed jobs to the community. She stated that the city would monitor uses at the airport, and businesses that did not meet the criteria would not be allowed.

Mark Greenfield, who represented Bero at the hearing, testified that Bero intends to use the property for airport specific uses, that the manufacturing business is proposed to employ thirteen to fifteen persons, and there is no intent to test firearms at this location.

A group of neighbors and representatives of the neighbors testified against the zone change, noting a number of issues including concerns about current road conditions and widths, and whether a private road is allowed to service a commercial development; whether there is enough water on-site to provide fire suppression; concerns about contamination from septic systems to existing residential water sources; whether there is a need for an additional campground when there is already a city-owned primitive campground immediately adjacent to the airport; and whether the application meets any of the five required exception standards needed for a zone change.

Are You Ready For Winter?

By William Haack

As we head into the winter months here in Vernonia and in Oregon, one question we need to ask ourselves is, "Are we personally prepared for another flood?" In this two-part series, Vernonia's Voice helps you look at how to be better prepared.

Part II - It Looks Like Rain

Imminent Flooding: If it's Raining Really, Really Hard. If it's been raining all day and will likely rain all night, you may want to do the following... there may be reason for concern.

- Secure your home. If you have time, bring in outdoor furniture. Move essential items to an upper floor.
- Turn off utilities at the main switches or valves if instructed to do so. Disconnect electrical appliances. Do not touch electrical equipment if you are wet or standing in water.

During a Flood: If a flood is likely in your area, you should:

- Listen to the radio or television for information.
- Be aware that flash-flooding can occur. If there is any possibility of a flash-flood, move immediately to higher ground. Do not wait for instructions to move.
- Be aware of streams, drainage channels, canyons, and other areas known to flood suddenly. Flash-floods can occur in these areas with or without such typical warnings as rain clouds or heavy rain.

If you have to leave your home, remember these evacuation tips: Do not walk through moving water. Six inches of moving water can make you fall. If you have to walk in water, walk where the water is not moving. Use a stick to check the firmness of the ground in front of you.

- Do not drive into flooded areas. If floodwaters rise around your car, abandon the car and move to higher ground if you can do so safely. You and the vehicle can be quickly swept away.

Driving Flood Facts: In both 2007 and 1996 winter storm events, both State Highway 47 and local streets were seriously flooded along the length of the Upper Nehalem River Valley. The following are important points to remember when driving in flood conditions:

- Six inches of water will reach the bottom of most passenger cars and vans, causing significant loss of control and increased potential for stalling out the engine.
- A foot of water will float most passenger cars and vans and cause trucks and sport utility vehicles significant loss of control.
- Two feet of rushing water can carry-away most vehicles including sport utility vehicles and pick-ups, especially where there are higher velocity currents caused by constrictions in the floodway environment

Know the Terms: Familiarize yourself with these terms to help identify a flood hazard:

- Flood Watch: Flooding is possible. Tune in to NOAA Weather Radio, commercial radio, or television for information.

- Flash-Flood Watch: Flash-flooding is possible. Be prepared to move to higher ground; listen to NOAA Weather Radio, commercial radio, or television for information.
- Flood Warning: Flooding is occurring or will occur soon; if advised to evacuate, do so immediately.
- Flash-Flood Warning: A flash-flood is occurring; seek higher ground on foot immediately.

After a Flood: The following are guidelines for the period following a flood:

- Listen for news reports to learn whether the community's water supply is safe to drink.
- Avoid floodwaters; water may be contaminated by oil, gasoline, or raw sewage. Water may also be electrically charged from underground or downed power lines.
- Avoid moving water.
- Be aware of areas where floodwaters have receded. Roads may have weakened and could collapse under the weight of a car.
- Stay away from downed power lines, and report them to the power company.
- Return home only when authorities indicate it is safe.
- Stay out of any building if it is surrounded by floodwaters.
- Use extreme caution when entering buildings; there may be hidden damage, particularly in foundations.
- Service damaged septic tanks, cesspools, pits, and leaching systems as soon as possible. Damaged sewage systems are serious health hazards.
- Clean and disinfect everything that got wet. Mud left from floodwater can contain sewage and chemicals.
- We will provide additional information on handling household items in the next information item that we release.

Additional Information

Flood Insurance: Consider the following facts:

- Flood losses are not covered under standard homeowners' insurance policies.
- FEMA manages the National Flood Insurance Program, which makes federally-backed flood insurance available in communities that agree to adopt and enforce floodplain management ordinances to reduce future flood damage. [It is important to clarify that this is the ONLY Flood Insurance available – it's this or nothing!]
- Flood insurance is available in most communities through insurance agents.
- There is a 30-day waiting period before flood insurance goes into effect, so don't delay.
- Flood insurance is available whether the building is in or out of the identified flood-prone area.
- Based on our experience, even if you are not in a designated flood zone, it may be prudent to have flood insurance.

For More Information

If you require more information about any of these topics, the following are resources that may be helpful:

- FEMA Publications After a Flood: The First Steps. L-198. Information for homeowners on preparedness, safety, and recovery from a flood.
- Homeowner's Guide to Retrofitting: Six Ways to Protect Your House from Flooding. L-235. A brochure about obtaining information about how to protect your home from flooding.
- Homeowner's Guide to Retrofitting: Six Ways to Protect Your House from Flooding. FEMA-312. A detailed manual on how to protect your home from flooding.
- About the Flood: Elevating Your Floodprone House. FEMA-347. This publication is intended for builders, code officials and homeowners.
- Protecting Building Utilities From Flood Damage. FEMA-348. This publication is intended for developers, architects, engineers, builders, code officials and homeowners.

LOCAL CONTACT NUMBERS

- Police: 911 or 503-429-7335
- Dispatch: 1-800-696-7795
- Fire: 911 or 503-429-8252
- Emergency management: 503-366-3905



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