

CityNews...

City Council January 5, 2009

City Recorder Announces City Officials Sworn In...

Vernonia City Recorder Joann Glass announced that at a Joint Elected Officials Meeting on January 1, 2009, Mayor Sally Harrison and City Councilors Randy Parrow and Kevin Hudson took their oaths of office. Glass stated that because of an emergency meeting that was held on January 1, 2009, all officials were needed to be present, and the oath was administered early. It had been intended that the oath of office would be administered at the regular January 5 City Council meeting.

New Police Officer Sworn In...

Interim Vernonia Police Chief Mike Kay administered the oath of office to new police officer Shawn Carnihan. Carnihan's fiancée, Jade, and his daughter, Madison, took part in the ceremony. Kay stated after the ceremony that Carnihan's first official day on the job was January 1, 2009, but that he had been volunteering his time as a reserve officer since December 1, 2008, and that Officer Carnihan had worked countless volunteer hours during the winter weather emergencies. "We're very proud to have him on the force," announced Kay to the council.



New Vernonia police officer Shawn Carnihan is sworn in by Interim Police Chief Mike Kay

Councilor Ball Named Council President...

Councilor Cindy Ball was elected City Council President by her peers. Ball would be responsible for running City Council Meetings if the Mayor is unable to attend.

Mayor Appoints City Commission and Committee Members...

Mayor Harrison reappointed Dan Brown and Sharon Parrow

to the Planning Commission; named Alan MacComb as a new Planning Commissioner; appointed Karen Wall-Mains to the Learning Center Committee; and re-appointed Jerry Keenon and Scott Laird to the Parks Committee. There is one remaining vacant position on the Planning Commission.

Council Discusses Water and Sewer Charges for Multi-Family Housing Units...

During topics from the floor, Mayor Harrison read a letter from Linda Wormington and heard from property owner Leo Stoddard who was in attendance, who both complained about excessive charges for water and sewer for multi-family dwellings. Interim City Administrator Jim Johnson explained that the Public Works Department had recommended creating separate charges for each hook-up in multi-family dwellings, which were adopted by the Council as part of rate increases in Resolution 14-08. Previously, multi-family dwellings only paid as a single dwelling. Johnson noted that these new charges have a negative impact on the landlord. Stoddard suggested that rates should be based on usage. Johnson reminded the council that they have had conversations about changing the rate structure to reward customers who use less water, and that a rate study is needed and planned, that would begin in February and take about six months to complete. Council recommended the issue be referred back to the Public Works Committee to suggest a solution.

Johnson to Remain as Interim Administrator...

Interim City Administrator Jim Johnson announced that he made a mistake when he discussed his current employment situation with the city, and that he will be able to remain employed as Interim City Administrator of Vernonia. Johnson, who is retired and receives PERS benefits, is limited to the number of hours he can work each year and still receive his benefits. Johnson stated that the hours he is able to work restarted at the beginning of the calendar year, allowing him to remain in his current position for approximately six more months.

City Council January 19, 2009

City Discusses Adjusting Planning Fees...

At the request of D.A.D.S. Recycling, the city is discussing allowing the charge of only one fee when two applications are presented at the same time. Alan and Sandy Dewebber had requested special consideration in moving their business to a location zoned Industrial and are required to apply for a Planning Commission approval of a Conditional Use Permit and a Site Development Plan Approval, both of which cost \$500. Council requested staff to create an amended resolution to combine the fees, creating lower

costs for this type of situation. "As a city, we can't be giving out dispensation to one person and then turn around and not allow the same for the next person," said Mayor Sally Harrison, in explaining to Mr. Dewebber why the city can't just waive all fees.

Council Considers Committee Assignments...

Interim City Administrator Jim Johnson has asked the council to consider ways to improve committee operations. Johnson has suggested that city councilors be assigned specific committees and that those councilors act as the chair of those committees they are assigned to. Johnson also asked the council to consider creating a new committee to review city Emergency Management. There are currently seven city committees, plus the city Budget Committee-- which includes all five members of the council.

Council Discusses Hiring Lobbyist...

Interim Administrator Johnson discussed the possibility of the city entering into an agreement with the Vernonia School District, Columbia County, and any other city that might wish to join, to jointly hire a Lobbyist to work in Washington, D.C., to make sure area concerns and economic interests are being considered by federal legislators. Johnson stated that a proposal has been made to the city by a firm. Participants would enter into an intergovernmental agreement and share the costs of the service. According to Vernonia Superintendent Ken Cox, the school district has offered to pay the first six months of any contract, and Johnson reported that the cost to the city would be \$1,000 per month. Councilors directed Johnson to pursue the idea, and reported he would return to council with any agreements or contracts that are presented.

Chief Kay Discusses Equipment Acquisition Programs...

Interim Police Chief Mike Kay presented council with some examples of equipment available through the Defense Reutilization and Marketing Service that the city participates in. Kay showed examples of generators, trucks and heavy equipment that the city could purchase at very reasonable costs to replace public works vehicles and provide the city with its own equipment in emergency situations. Kay also announced that the Vernonia Lions Club had donated \$2,300 for the purchase of an outboard motor for a Zodiac rescue boat that the Vernonia Police Department plans to acquire through the Department of Defense. Kay also announced he has leased a 2000 Ford Ranger Extended Cab 4x4 XLT for the Public Works Department and a 2001 Ford Ranger Extended Cab 4x4 XLT for the Police Department through the State Motor Pool Program at a cost of \$70.00 per month for each vehicle.

City Council Column

By Kevin Hudson

Since this is my first article as a newly elected City Councilor, the first thing I would like to do is thank the voters in Vernonia for giving me the opportunity to serve our city, so THANK YOU, VERNONIA!

And because I don't think it can be said too much, I want to say how pleased I am with the way the community responded to the emergency events of December, 2008, and January, 2009. I thought the Joint Incident Command worked very well and that the communication and teamwork between all of the agencies, departments and organizations was outstanding. Additionally, the efforts and support received from local businesses and residents during these events was incredible, and I am very proud of our community. So again, THANK YOU, VERNONIA!

Since I am new to City Council, there are many of you who don't know who I am or where I stand on issues. I'll start out by saying that I consider public safety and a balanced budget high priorities. While I am very pleased with our level of preparedness during the events mentioned above, emergency preparedness has a significant cost associated with it. That said, I would like to share a recent experience I had with two members of the City's staff.

I accompanied them on a trip to visit a State Surplus Property facility located in Salem. It's an amazing place. While the inventory inherently varies, on any given day you may find things like bicycles, kitchen appliances, office furniture, generators, dump trucks, service trucks, emergency vehicles, excavation equipment, as well as passenger cars, trucks and SUVs. Administrative and Financial Services Manager Joann Glass was in need of more filing space. She picked up two large filing cabinets and an information display tree that together would cost hundreds of dollars new. Surplus price-- \$57.50 total! Chief Kay had done some legwork ahead of time and we were going to look at a Zodiac Mark II, 6 person inflatable rescue boat, including the motor and trailer. This is the same model used by the National Guard in the December, 2007, flood (and we had to wait for them to get here). The equipment was in good shape and the going rate for this rig is around \$14,800. The Chief had negotiated the price down to \$2500 (yes, \$2500), but that's still a lot of money for a community like ours. However, thanks to a donation of \$2420 by the Vernonia Lions Club, we were able to get this rescue boat for only \$80 out of the City's pocket! THANK YOU, VERNONIA LIONS!

After leaving the surplus facility, we stopped in at one of the Oregon State Police fabrication facilities. The Chief went in to talk and a few minutes later he was waving me in. We left with a light bar and two refurbished video camera systems (similar to ICOP) worth about \$9,100 total. Our cost, \$0.00! THANK YOU, OREGON STATE POLICE!

Emergency preparedness is part of public safety and while I don't have the exact figure at this moment, I know that the City spent thousands and thousands of dollars on equipment rentals and services just in recent emergencies. As you have witnessed, it has become relatively normal to have an emergency of some sort nearly every year. If we utilize these surplus programs to acquire equipment we normally have to rent, it will certainly pay for itself the first time we have to use it, and will likely save us hundreds of thousands in the long run. Having this equipment will also reduce our dependence on outside resources and that's important to us because we have a tendency to become isolated during emergencies. The point of all this is that when you see the Zodiac boat or other newly acquired equipment or vehicles around town, know that the people at City Hall are being frugal with our dollars. I know it because I've witnessed it first hand, which is the way I prefer to get information.

And finally, as a new City Councilor, I would like to hear from you. So, if you have any comments, criticism, questions or suggestions, feel free to send them to me at khud.cov@gmail.com. I will read them all and reply if applicable. I look forward to hearing from you. Thanks again.

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