

Vernonia City News...

At the November 2, 2009, Vernonia City Council Meeting:

Conner Promotion Ceremony Takes Place--



Vernonia Police Officer Mike Conner was promoted to Sergeant.

Vernonia Police Officer Michael Connor was publicly recognized for his promotion to Sergeant with a Pinning Ceremony during the City Council Meeting. Vernonia City Administrator Bob Young performed the hon-

ors of pinning on Connor's new badge.

Council Starts Meeting with Executive Session--

In a somewhat unusual move, City Council began their meeting with an Executive Session. The session required everyone, except City staff and Media to be removed from the chambers. Following the return to open session, City Administrator Bob Young noted that there were supposed to be two pinnings during the session, because he has approved the promotion of Sergeant Mike Kay to Captain, but that at Kay's request his ceremony was postponed. "There have been some things-- he is in the union right now and the union attorneys are dealing with it," stated Young. Young then made a public statement which he said came from the Executive Session: "Because of some accusations, I asked our attorneys to look into the background and some things about the accusations and Mike (Kay's) background. The result has come back from the attorney's investigation. Based on the information, they said, 'I find no evidence of deceit or untruthfulness in the information we have received. Mr. Kay appears to have disclosed all matters during the pre-employment background investigation that he was asked to disclose. Therefore, I conclude that Mr. Kay has not been deceitful or untruthful during the recruitment process. I find no basis for the city to conduct any further investiga-

tion of Mr. Kay, or even to pursue discipline under the collective bargaining agreement.' In other words, he's cleared. I just want to say that publicly."

Council Amends Ordinance 842-- Council approved minor changes to Ordinance 842 that established the city Public Works Committee.

Council Establishes Police Officer Training Fee-- Council passed Resolution 23-09, amending Resolution 14-08, establishing a Police Officer Training Fee whenever Columbia County Justice Court imposes fines. Fees of \$25.00 for any traffic violation and \$50.00 for any criminal violation would be included in any judgement and shall be collected and credited to the City general fund for the benefit of police department training and training-related expenses.

At the November 16, 2009 City Council Meeting:

Kay Promotion Takes Place-- With a standing-room-only crowd looking on, Vernonia Police Sergeant Michael Kay was promoted to Police Captain. Kay's grandfather performed the honors during the pinning ceremony, and his mother was also in attendance.



Mike Kay was promoted to Police Captain. Kay is pictured here with his grandfather, Hal Looper (left), who pinned on Kay's new badge, and his mother (right).

Council Meets Foreign Exchange Student-- Council had a chance to meet one of Vernonia's foreign exchange students, Anisa Mukhtorova, from Tajikistan. Miss Mukhtorova, who will be attending school at

VHS for one year, is living with Randy and Sharon Parrow. Miss Mukhtorova, dressed in traditional clothing from her native country, made a presentation to Council about life in Tajikistan, discussing geography, food, clothing, and resources.

Council Approves Christmas Lighted Parade Route--

Council approved a one-way route through Vernonia on Bridge Street, beginning at California Avenue and ending at City Hall for the Lighted Parade scheduled for December 5th. Vernonia Pride, who is organizing this year's parade, had originally requested the parade begin at City Hall, turn around at the schools and return through town.

Council Attempts to Settle Sewer Back-up Issue--

Vernonia resident Dennis Weller spoke during Topics from the Floor and requested Council resolve a sewer back-up problem that had occurred at his residence on October 28. According to Weller, sewer water flowed into his home, damaging carpeting and other personal items. According to Weller, a contractor was sent to his home and began work. Weller was then told by the City Insurance company, CIS, that the city was not responsible for the damage and that CIS would only pay \$1,000 for clean-up. Weller asked the city to resolve the issue.

Council later adjourned to Executive Session. Upon returning, Council approved a motion to pay Dennis Weller \$2,300 for damages, plus \$1,000 from the insurance company, with an agreement written by city attorneys that the city would not be held liable in the future unless the city is found negligent. Weller said he would have an attorney look over any agreement.



Anisa Mukhtorova, a foreign exchange student from Tajikistan, introduced herself and her country to the Vernonia City Council.

Vernonia Council Selects Wastewater Treatment Plan

Vernonia City Council has approved selection of an updated wastewater treatment system for the City of Vernonia at their November 16, 2009, council meeting. The Vernonia Public Works Committee had reviewed a number of alternatives for moving forward with treatment plans and made their final recommendation to Council, which was accepted unanimously.

In a report presented to Council, City Administrator Bob Young and Consultant Jim Johnson summarized the actions taken over approximately

the last five years regarding wastewater treatment. According to the report, a Facilities Plan was completed; funds were borrowed; construction was completed on Phase 1 work on the wastewater system; the flood of 2007 occurred; a Community Development Block Grant was awarded to update the facilities plan; Brown and Caldwell engineers was hired to assist with an update of the facilities plan; and Public Works reviewed the alternatives.

The selected plan was the least costly option and is projected to cost

\$4.53 million. Actual costs are expected to be somewhat higher once the plan is refined. Johnson stated that the city would need to borrow money for construction and that his hope was to keep the increased cost to Vernonia ratepayers at less than \$25 per sewer customer per month. Construction is expected to begin in Spring of 2010. The facility is being built to handle population growth of up to 3,000 people.

Council made their selection of a preferred plan with the stipulation that all regulatory agencies approve the plan in writing before the city arranges for any financing and construction.

The selected plan would use the existing lagoon treatment ponds, which would be significantly reduced in size, with dam containment walls that are raised about two feet. Lagoon treatment and a natural wetlands system will be used to treat the city's wastewater, producing a Class A level of water. That water could be discharged into Vernonia Lake to help keep water levels high or used to irrigate crops for human consumption.

Johnson addressed concerns that DEQ would not allow use of the current lagoon system. "I don't think they have any legal ability to stop us, because we have an existing situation and permit with those lagoons," said Johnson.

Reducing the size of the lagoons opens up the floodplain so in the event

of a future highwater event, floodwaters could flow more easily and reduce the impact in the residential areas surrounding downtown Vernonia.

According to Johnson, the Army Corps of Engineers is paying for a hydraulic study which would model the effects that removing part of the lagoon would have on flood mitigation. Johnson said the city is also looking at the effects that lowering sections of the bike path along Webb Way might have on future flood events. "This could allow flood waters to flow through by the lagoons and back into the Nehalem," said Johnson. "We're going to try to prove that there is a beneficial impact on future floods if we make these changes." According to Johnson, the potential for flood mitigation from the project could lead to federal assistance with the costs associated with the wastewater project.

The new natural wetlands system, which would be created where the lagoons are removed and used as filtration, would be funded by the Vernonia School District. The District must mitigate for wetlands on the site where their new facility will be built.

Information about the new wastewater treatment plan will be presented during a Town Hall Meeting as part of a Two Year Flood Anniversary on December 3, at 7:00 P.M. in the VHS cafeteria.

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