

VERNONIA'S voice

reflecting the spirit of our community

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Proposed Vernonia Sign Ordinance Creates Controversy



At the January 19th Vernonia City Council Meeting, a hearing was held to hear public testimony on a proposed updated Sign Code Ordinance that was being recommended by the Vernonia Planning Commission.

Numerous business owners showed up for the hearing and presented a number of objections to the proposed code.

Objections raised included: the proposed code was too long and confusing; objections to the continued refusal to allow interior-lighted signs; concerns about restrictions and fees on temporary signs and concerns about the Design Theme that names "1900's Historic Mill town," as the basis for sign designs in all zoning districts.

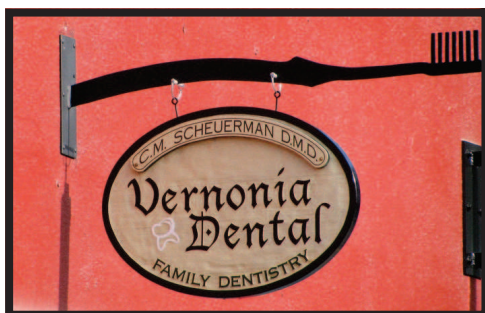
Council chose to leave the hearing open and make no decision on the Planning Commission's recommendation.

At the following City Council meeting on February 1st, Mayor Sally Harrison reopened the Public Hearing and took additional testimony. Citizen Marilyn Nicks made the only comments and spoke on behalf of a group of busi-

ness owners, making three recommended changes to the proposed Ordinance. Those changes came from a meeting of interested business owners who met on January 27th.

Nicks presented results from a survey she did among business owners, from which she received fifty results. She stated that the results of the poll confirmed concerns that the Sign Code Ordinance contained regulations that local businesses did not want.

Nicks noted three items that her group asked be changed in the proposed code based on the results of the survey and other discussions:



1) The Design Theme of "1900's Historic Mill Town" be removed from the code. (43 respondents to the survey were against a Design Theme, seven were for it.)

2) The ban on interior-lighted signs be removed from the code. (43 respondents were for interior-lighted signs, 7 were against.)

3) The \$10 fee to approve temporary signs be removed and that busi-

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Vernonia Pioneer Museum Preserves Historic Treasures

The recent publication and release of the new historic book, *Vernonia*, by Arcadia Publishing, in collaboration with the Vernonia Pioneer Museum Association is exciting news for the whole community. It is especially exciting for the volunteers of the Museum Association.



tion whose love of history has encouraged them to dedicate countless hours to helping preserve the unique story of Vernonia.

The Vernonia Pioneer Museum, located in the old office of the Oregon-American Mill is a treasure trove of logging, mill and community artifacts, photographs, personal histories and other obscure and arcane relics. It houses rocks, tools, clothing, furniture, and just about anything else that is a piece of Vernonia, or sometimes just plain history.

The release of the *Vernonia* book this past week is one more piece to the legacy of the Pioneer Museum and

the role it plays in preserving the unique story of Vernonia.

But the new book isn't the only exciting news at the Pioneer Museum these days. The recent settlement of a lawsuit between the Columbia County Historical Society and Columbia County

over who owns the rights to artifacts held in the Museum means that many new items will be available for display. The city of Vernonia owns the building and leases it to Columbia County, but volunteer curators have been unable to move display items while the lawsuit has dragged on for around ten years and ownership was in dispute. Columbia County now has ownership and use of all the artifacts held there.

Of course, more items might not make it out for display for awhile yet, as volunteers are still recovering from the massive effort it took to gather and catalogue photos and write and verify facts for the text of the *Vernonia* book.

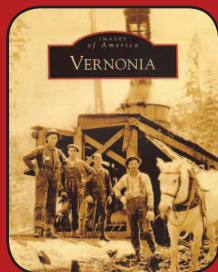
The Vernonia Book Project

The *Vernonia* book was officially released on February 1st, and The Museum Association held a book signing on February 6th to launch sales in Vernonia.

Museum volunteer and Board Secretary Barbara Larsen was the book

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Oregon Solutions Sees Progress On Vernonia School

The Oregon Solutions Steering Committee for the Vernonia Schools Project met in Vernonia on January 26 for an updated progress report on the project. The forum provided the "big picture" on the overall direction of the capital campaign to raise \$24 million and the school construction plans. It also provided an opportunity to bring all of the multi-sector parties that are involved in the project together. The meeting provided updates on financing and fundraising and also introduced the concept of what is being called the "Oregon Natural Resources Center," a recent addition to the design and plan for the project.

Oregon Solutions Co-Convenor Tony Hyde opened the meeting by expressing just how much activity is happening on the project. "We have been in a full court press, and we will be in a full court press until we get this project completed," stated Hyde.

Oregon Solutions Project

Manager, Alissa Keny-Guyer, who is directing Phase Two of the Vernonia Schools Project, noted the importance of the collaboration between the school and the rest of the community and reiterated the goals of the project. "The big picture is important because this collaboration is not just about the bricks and mortar of the school," said Keny-Guyer. "This project requires a collaboration of different partners, private and public, on different levels-- local, state, federal. It's very important that we can present to the outside world and to potential funders that this is going to be a really vibrant school. It's going to be the kind of school that links kids with opportunities for economic development."

"There is a perception in the community that nothing is happening," said Hyde. "That is simply not true. We have a lot of things that are very close and people that we are working with that we hope are going to be donors."

"We are meeting two to four times each week on different committee levels, every week," continued Hyde. "This is the most intense project I have ever worked on in my life."

After the meeting, Hyde made this analogy: "You don't just show up for the Indianapolis 500 and start racing. There's a lot of preparation and behind-the-scenes work before the race that goes on that nobody sees. That's where this project is now, the preparation stage."

Building Design and Concepts

Superintendent Cox discussed the current design of the building, noting that the architects have been asked again to make adjustments to find ways to stay within the \$37 million proposed budget. "The revisions have mostly led to improvements on the school," said Cox. "The new design is very similar to the rendering we already have."

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