

Vernonia City News...

At the February 1, 2010, City Council Meeting--

Mayor Harrison Speaks From the Floor; Chastises *The Independent*--

Stating that she wanted to express her own opinions and not implicate her fellow Council members, Mayor Sally Harrison stepped down from the dais, handing over the gavel and control of the meeting to Council President Cindy Ball. Harrison then proceeded to read from a prepared statement. Citing as her inspiration a recent article in the January 7th issue of *The Independent* by Noni Anderson, which included remarks Harrison called "unsubstantiated," Harrison proceeded to comment on a pattern of reporting history by *The Independent*. Harrison noted disagreements between the city around the Vernonia Community Learning Center, articles and comments about former City Administrator Dick Kline that Harrison called a "character assassination," the "... attempt to ruin another man's reputation and career," referring to Vernonia Police Captain Mike Kay, and the recent articles that called City Administrator Bob Young and City Attorney Jeff Bennett, "...liars." "There have been so many lies and half-truths printed and said..." said Harrison about *The Independent's* Publisher Clark McGaugh. "Clark told me he wasn't going to stop until Kay was gone. Sounds like a personal vendetta to me."

Harrison closed her remarks with the following statements: "I'm not advocating we cover-up, overlook or suppress what's happening. I'm saying, just tell the bloody truth! Consider your motives, look at the issues and get all the facts. Don't be so quick to point a finger and find fault. If you are truly a friend of Vernonia and truly wish the best for this town, I don't think that's too much to ask for."

Officer Kay's Attorney Presents Information--

Jason Short, attorney for Vernonia Police Captain Mike Kay, spoke on behalf of Kay. Short addressed Kay's silence in response to continued public accusations raised in *The Independent* about Kay. "Enough is enough, and he [Kay] asked me to come here and speak on his behalf." Short stated that he is a member of the Fraternal Order of Police and he assists police officers when they have legal issues. Short proceeded to give a work history of Kay's career, repeatedly stressing that Kay has "...never been fired or laid off" from a police agency position. Short referenced several letters of recommendation from previous agencies where Kay was employed.

Short addressed a situation from over ten years ago when Kay was accused of domestic violence and was acquitted of those charges. In relation to that domestic violence situation, Short noted that Kay was found guilty of a single charge of Contempt of Court for Violating a Temporary Restraining Order. According to Short, Kay was on duty and en route to a police call with lights and sirens when his accuser saw him and filed a complaint. Kay was found to have violated proximity restrictions that were part of the Restraining Order. Kay was sanctioned, the sanction was then suspended and Kay was placed on probation. Kay later had a probation violation charge dismissed. Short went on to explain that the Contempt of Court Charge is not criminal in nature, and Kay does not have any criminal conviction as a result of the incident. Short stated that *The Independent* has on numerous occasions called this a criminal proceeding and claimed that Kay has a criminal background.

Short made numerous references to incidents between Officer Kay and *The Independent* Publisher Clark McGaugh. Short referenced accusations by McGaugh that former Vernonia City Administrator Dick Kline had been fired from his job after being arrested for molesting his daughter. An investigation by Vernonia Police found these accusations to be untrue. Short stated McGaugh lied about those accusations. Short also noted two situations where McGaugh created a disturbance after being denied access as a reporter to the Incident Command Post in December, 2007, and in January, 2008, caused a disturbance in City Hall which involved armed security and Officer Kay. Short also noted the pipe bomb incident at the Vernonia schools when McGaugh accused Kay of overreacting to the incident. Short also noted that in September of 2009, McGaugh filed a personnel complaint against Kay which listed five separate complaints.

Short addressed the recent report from Department of Public Safety Standards and Training (DPSST) concerning Kay's moral fitness that was instigated by complaints by McGaugh. Short noted that DPSST has chosen to not investigate Kay. Short pointed out that *The Independent* only used one part of the memo that explained that decision, claiming the reason DPSST chose not to discipline Kay was because the incident happened before 2001. Short pointed out that the memo goes on to show that the Department has the ability to investigate incidents before 2001, but in this case chose not to because Kay's conduct did not violate the established moral fitness standards.

Later in the Council meeting during Topics from the Floor, Clark McGaugh spoke and stated, "Everything I've written I can document. Everything I've put in there, I have documentation for what was in there. I take exception to saying that we lied. I stand by what I say."

Council Continues Sign Ordinance Hearing--

Council continued the Sign Ordinance Hearing that was left open during the last Council meeting on January 18th (see related story which begins on the front page). Council heard additional recommendations from citizen Marilyn Nicks, representing a group of citizens and business owners, with suggested changes to the proposed Ordinance. After the hearing was officially closed, Council returned to deliberate on the Ordinance and asked City Administrator Bob Young to take suggested changes back to the Planning Commission who originally drafted the proposed Ordinance. Those suggested changes included: removing the Design Theme from the Ordinance; removal of the ban on interior-lighted signs; and removal of the temporary sign permit and fee structure.

Council Approves Airport Standards--

Council approved proposed minimum standards for commercial activities which are intended to help the city meet its goal to develop, improve, and attract visitors to the Vernonia Airport.

Vernonia School Burglary Suspects In Custody

Vernonia Police Officers took two men into custody on January 26, 2010 after a Columbia Grand Jury indicted them in connection with burglary at Vernonia High School in which sixteen laptop computers were stolen.

Jeremy Gum, 19, and Cody Winningham, 18, both of Vernonia, were named on warrants of arrest issued in Columbia County Circuit Court. Gum and Winningham were each charged with four counts of Burglary

in the Second Degree, and one count of Theft in the First Degree.

A Vernonia Police Department investigation led to information connecting the two men with the laptop computers, valued at over \$16,000. Vernonia officers arrested the two without incident and lodged them both in the Columbia County Jail. Gum was lodged with bail set at \$60,000. Winningham is in custody with bail set at \$75,000.

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SATURDAY February 13th



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