

Council Makes No Decision on Rezoning

By Scott Laird

The Vernonia City Council chose to make no decision on a major rezoning project following a public hearing that was part of the regular City Council meeting on October 1, 2012.

After listening to public testimony, the Council members agreed that they could wait for more information to adequately answer questions from the audience and scheduled a continuance of the hearing on November 19, 2012.

At the start of the hearing Vernonia Mayor Josette Mitchell stated that she would abstain from voting on any decision since she is related to one of the property owners included in the rezoning. Councilors Donna Webb and Kim Tierney were present for the meeting; Councilors Bruce McNair and Randy Parrow attended the meeting via conference call. It was unclear whether Parrow remained in contact after initially connecting with the meeting, as he failed to respond to questions later in the hearing.

The hearing in front of the Vernonia City Council followed a hearing by the Vernonia Planning Commission on September 20, 2012, in which the Planning Commission recommended to Council approval of the rezoning by a 4-1 vote. The Planning Commission held three informal public meetings about the rezoning prior to their September 20th hearing.

The City of Vernonia has entered into this rezoning project following significant use changes as a result of the 2007 Flood and mitigation that has been performed in ensuing years. Currently eight commercial properties and 133 residential properties have been declared "substantially damaged" within the city limits. Forty homes and six commercial buildings were demolished and transferred to City ownership. Twenty-one homes were demolished and replaced by private owners. Eleven homes were lost to foreclosure. Thirty-six homes were elevated above the flood line.

Based on city economic goals and the loss of previously available employment lands, the Planning Commission has proposed several changes to create 3.5 acres of new commercial potential properties and 7.6 acres of new industrial potential property through the rezoning process.

There are three components to this rezoning

project. The first includes changes in the designation of ninety private and four public parcels in flood hazard areas to Institutional Public (IP) or Public Recreation (PR). The second component would rezone thirty-five parcels from General Residential (GR) to Downtown (DT) commercial. The third area for rezoning is a single parcel on California Avenue that would be changed from General Residential to Light Industrial (LI).

At the hearing on October 1st, two people, Dr. Kenneth Cox and Casey Mitchell testified in favor of the zoning changes, plus a third testimony from Brad Curtis was read into the record. Four citizens, Sally Harrison, Don Willard, Kristie Freeman and Gary Meyer testified against the rezoning. One citizen, Sam Poetter, testified neither for nor against the rezoning.

There did not seem to be much concern about the change of parcels to IP in the flood hazard zone, although there are questions about how the city will manage these properties. A plan to lease these properties to adjacent landowners for personal use in exchange for maintenance of the property is not allowable under Community Development Block Grant guidelines.

Objections to the rezoning project have been raised by several residents along Rose and Weed Avenues who would be affected by the second component of the rezoning. Those parcels would see a change in zoning from residential to commercial and would allow the development of businesses in the neighborhood.

Salmon Festival 2012



Maddox Brewer Knight carving her pumpkin at the 10th Annual Vernonia Salmon Festival on October 6, 2012. See page 19 for more photos.

The Planning Commission has proposed the changes in this neighborhood based on information found in the City of Vernonia Economic Opportunity Analysis (EOA) report which demonstrates a need for more property to be made available for business development. The EOA report is based on updated land inventory and population projections.

According to the City Staff Report from City Planner Carole Connell, the City has found that, based on existing mixed use patterns of development in the

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Let's Go Loggers! Cheerleading is Back at VHS

After an absence of several years, Cheerleading has returned to Vernonia High School.

New Cheerleading coach Denise Way has revived the program, formed a new squad and is working to instill a sense of school spirit on campus.

"We've had a huge interest in the squad once we got it started this year," says Way, or Coach Dee as the girls on the squad like to call her.

The VHS Cheerleading squad has fifteen girls this year. "None of these girls have been cheerleaders before," says Way, who has been somewhat surprised by her squad. "In all my years of coaching I have never seen a group of girls pick this up and learn it, and want to learn, and get this stuff down, as quick as they have. It absolutely floors me."

Way says the squad has been pretty active in the community heading into the fall sports season. In addition to their regular training, the girls helped out at the Booster Day Camp, running a popular face painting booth. The squad also marched in the Jamboree Parade in August. They were also responsible for painting the grandstands at Greenman Field this summer. Since school began Way and her squad have been decorating the lockers, hallways and bulletin

boards around the school campus as well as a way of boosting school spirit.

Recently the squad held a "Little Loggers Cheer Clinic," for girls from K through 8th grade. A total of eight girls participated in the three hour clinic. "This is all being organized by our cheerleaders," says Way. "They created the material and they are teaching the younger girls. It's all

son. "They've melded really well with the team and the rest of the girls have really welcomed them and have enjoyed having them be part of the team," says Way. Hanna Hofer is an exchange student from Germany who is a member of the VHS Cheerleading squad. Hofer says she has never done any kind of cheerleading before but participates in ballroom dancing and other Latin styles of dance back



VHS Cheerleaders Sheyanne Pedersen, Mikila Solberg, Hanna Farsch, Jessica Gardner. Photo courtesy of Denise Way.

them." The Little Loggers performed at the October 5th VHS home football game. They will also perform at an evening Little Guy football game this season.

The squad includes three foreign exchange students this sea-

in Germany. "I was very happy they had a cheerleader squad here, because I thought I couldn't dance here," says Hofer. "It is one of the real stereotypes from the United States—in all the movies you always see the

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