

Vernonia City News...

At the October 13, 2012 City Council Meeting:

Council Holds Hearing on Building Fees—City Council held a public hearing prior to the start of the regular City Council Meeting concerning proposed changes to the Building Code Program Fees. The proposed changes under consideration included increases to fees, streamlining of fees and changes in the code to reflect new technology and laws such as solar installations and fire sprinklers. Building Codes in the City of Vernonia are enforced by The Building Department, LLC, an outside contractor. The Building Department has not increased fees since 2007. Fees were proposed to be raised about 11%. No one testified for or against the changes. Council later adopted the proposed changes by a 5-0 vote.

Council Holds Hearing on City Parking Code—Council continued a public hearing to discuss proposed changes to the City Parking Code that had been recommended by the Vernonia Planning Commission. Council had previously opened the hearing on July 16, 2012. Council also held a workshop and discussed the issue on October 12, 2012. According to the written staff report provided, the City and business community have found it difficult to comply

with elements of the existing parking requirements in the downtown district. According to city code any new building or change of use in the downtown zone requires that parking be provided in accordance with city off-street parking requirements. Many buildings do not have land available for off street parking, making occupancy of a new business impossible without a variance approved by the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission has proposed an exception to the parking requirements that would allow a business or occupant to request a waiver and pay a \$10 fee per space required. The purpose of the fee is to establish a parking fund to construct, operate and maintain public off-street parking for the downtown district. Council is considering adding a credit system that would provide a discount to all businesses based on the current number of on street spaces available in the downtown district.

Scott Laird testified against the amendment, suggesting instead that the City increase business license fees for all businesses in the city to spread out the cost for downtown parking. Clark McGough testified against the changes asking why the City would start charging fees if they don't yet know the end cost for the proposed public lots.

Council closed the hearing but

made no final decision on the proposed amendments to the parking code.

Council Hears From Ridge Riders—George Bellingham, speaking on behalf of the Vernonia Ridge Riders, spoke during topics from the floor. Bellingham expressed dissatisfaction with the City's handling of a disagreement over their lease for use of City property at the horse arena. The City has raised questions about the validity of the lease. The Ridge Riders contacted an attorney who is now in correspondence with the City of Vernonia attorney. City Administrator Bill Haack told Bellingham that the City was waiting for a response from the Ridge Riders attorney. Mayor Josette Mitchell told Bellingham that, because the attorneys were involved, Council could not discuss the matter.

Council Appoints Gwin to Airport Committee—Mayor Josette Mitchell, with the approval of Council and based on a recommendation of the Airport Committee, appointed Rick Gwin to the Airport Committee.

Council Approved Final Residential Buyout—Council approved the purchase and use of funds for what is probably the final residential buyout of flood damaged property. Community Action

Team representative Dan Brown, who is overseeing the project, told Council that there is still a possibility that four business properties could be purchased through the program before it is completed.

Council Approves Changes to Travel Trailer Code—With the first and second readings of Ordinance 885, Council approved amendments to the city code that enforces rules for habitation of a travel trailer. The main change to the ordinance allows for the temporary use of a recreational vehicle for occasional use such as cooking, storage, play and work that typically occur during daytime hours. Inhabiting a recreational vehicle as a dwelling, except where approved, is prohibited unless the occupant obtains a permit from the city.

Council Approves Changes to Smoke Free Workplace Law—With the second reading of Ordinance 884, by a vote of 4-1, Council prohibited the use of electronic cigarettes within the interior of facilities owned by the city of Vernonia, on outside property that are designated as tobacco free owned by the City of Vernonia and in vehicles owned by the City of Vernonia. Councilor Bruce McNair voted against the ordinance.

City Information and Updates Available by Email

Citizens who wish to receive meeting information and updates can request to be placed on an email list at City Hall. Please contact Joann Glass at joann@vernonia-or.gov and asked to be placed on the "Citizen Notification List."

Vernonia Geographic

By Ben Fousek

In this installment, I wanted to discuss land use rezoning here in Vernonia, but I'm going to hold off for a month. I continue to work on some of the analysis and mapping for the Vernonia Economic Opportunity Analysis. I'm excited to be bringing you some insights into land use in Vernonia, and why the rezoning project is important to Vernonia's future.

Another topic of interest to myself, and many of you, is the return of salmon to the Upper Nehalem Basin. Salmon are culturally important to Vernonia, and the continued success of salmon should be a priority for all of us. I'm pleased to be helping that effort by providing geographic information and mapping support to the Upper Nehalem Watershed Council (UNWC).

While the UNWC has used geographic information systems (GIS) for some time now, the full potential of this technology is beginning to have dramatic effect on the way the UNWC prepares for and executes restoration projects. The three steps of the process are 1) data collection, 2) analysis, and 3) mapping.

The foundation of any GIS is data. In recent years, the increased accuracy of data sets, such as the stream network and digital elevation models (DEM), have made it much easier to identify areas which are

in need of restoration. Once an area has been identified field reconnaissance can be used to pin point locations for large wood placement, invasive plant mitigation, and tree planting. Until recently this information had been collected with hand written notes. With the UNWC's acquisition of a hand held GPS unit loaded with specialized GIS software we are now able to collect point data with an accuracy of a few meters, as well as attribute data and photos. With all the data collected it's time to see what the data tells us.

GIS analysis is comparing two or more data sets by the geographic location of the data or the underlying attribute data. Preparing and executing GIS analysis is the most complex part of what I do, and as such, I won't get into too many details, but rather give an example of analysis I performed recently. After acquiring the Rapid Bio Assessment data prepared by Western Oregon University (RBA is a fancy term for juvenile fish counts), a specific reach of stream in the upper Pebble Creek basin was revealed to have lower than average juvenile fish counts compared with other reaches in the area. Stream data, such as the presence of large wood or lack thereof, and locations of invasive plants, was collected in the field and compared to the RBA data. It was surprising to find there were some areas with relatively good stream health, but low fish

counts. Those areas it turns out are just upstream from areas which are in need of restoration. The conclusion being, a reach of stream in poor health can affect upstream reaches in good health. This information will help in determining the amount of resources needed and specific locations of restoration sites to improve the entire reach.

The mapping component is all about the graphical representation of the data to share with others. Map production allows the UNWC to better represent proposed projects when applying for project funding, as well as reporting progress back to the state when a project is completed. Of course, maps are very handy for internal use for an endless number of purposes related to the operation of the UNWC.

Geographic information is powerful tool for the continuing work of maintaining and improving salmon habitat. I hope my contribution to this effort will ensure we can all continue to enjoy and be amazed by these creatures into the future.

Vernonia GeoFact: The three Class 6 hydrology basins that converge in and around Vernonia are: Coon Creek, Pebble Creek and Lower Rock Creek.

Ben Fousek is the owner of Triangle GIS

Vernonia City Council Meetings and Closures

City Council Meetings are scheduled for 7 PM:

Monday, November 5, 2012
Monday, November 19, 2012

City Closures are scheduled for:
Veterans Day, Mon. November 12
Thanksgiving Day, November 22
Staff Day, November 23

Dates and times subject to change due to conflicts of schedules



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