

Vernonia Candidates Questionnaire Responses *continued from page 3*

tire Council directs a City Administrator to do so. The Mayor presides over the Council meetings and keeps the order. The Mayor and the Council President sign the checks that need to be signed for City expenditures; and the Mayor, as the leader of Council, should be a positive voice and advocate for the City and its needs. I stated in question 1 that I want to represent Vernonians in a way that considers all options and sides to issues and looks at the bigger, wider picture of what does the most good for the most people. This is the role of Council. It is a non-partisan, volunteer position. It should not be fraught with political agendas and special interests. The City can, and should, set its own ordinances, policies, and regulations but it also works in a larger system of County, State, and Federal regulatory bodies. We should challenge those when, and if, appropriate but we do have to find ways to work successfully within them as well. Another major role for the Council is to work collaboratively with the City Administrator. Council should support the efforts of the City staff through the City Administrator and be responsive to any issue that may arise whether it be positive or negative. The Council also has the critical role and responsibility of making sure the budget is sound and that spending is under control and that savings are occurring.

J.R. Allen: I see the City Council as the direct representatives of the citizens of Vernonia and I would take that responsibility very seriously. I understand it is Council's responsibility to legislate, set goals, and work on current and future infrastructure. I also feel it is extremely important to listen to the community and also communicate information.

Michael Seager: Be a Positive representative of the City of Vernonia. Attend Council meetings and attend Committee meetings. Report Committee business to Council. Vote on ordinances and resolutions and city business, attend workshops to establish priorities of the City of Vernonia.

I have been honored to serve on the Vernonia City Council for the last four (4) years and assist the Council and Administrator in establishing and en-

forcing policy for the City of Vernonia. This does not always make you popular, but when you are representing the public, that just comes with the job.

Dale Webb: My view of the role of the City Council is, that along with the Mayor and with the views and concerns of the town residents, to set the goals and expectations for the City Administrator. The responsibility of the Council is to then observe and ensure that the goals and concerns of the town residents are being effectively met by working with the City Administrator to achieve success. We all should be working together as Team Vernonia!

3. The City Council and Mayor have final approval of the City Budget. How familiar are you with Vernonia's City Budget and the departments that operate within that budget?

Rick Hobart: It is very important for the City to effectively operate and serve its citizens with an ongoing balanced budget. To have financial stability, the Mayor and four Councilors, along with five community members, serve on a budget board and begin their work January 1. The department heads, administration, and a ten-member board, work together to complete the budget by July 1.

Jill Hult: I am very familiar with the City Budget as I have been on Council for 4 years and have been a member of the Budget Committee for that time including being the Chair of the Budget Committee for 2 years. Vernonia has a stronger budget than it has in the past that is being managed effectively. We need to remain future-focused for infrastructure and other livability needs like Streets and Parks improvements, for example, because there are still shortages. This means thinking out into the future and looking for ways to build capacity in our reserves and contingencies. The City also has to be aware of rising costs to the citizens and be willing to think outside the box to put more money in residents' pockets when we can. Some examples of how we have been proactive in not only saving money in the City's Budget but in trying to alleviate higher costs to residents as well as make the system

more equitable and efficient is the work the Public Works Committee, City, and Council did regarding a water rate study or by replacing old, worn out meters that were not accurately reading water usage. The City Administrator fought hard for Vernonia's budget interests with the Waste Water Treatment Plant and not only is Vernonia in compliance with State and Federal regulatory agencies, we were able to pay down the sewer loan faster which means we can look at other savings this may allow. In a small town with most of its tax base coming from households rather than larger businesses, our budget is tight. Each department is tasked with making hard choices and advocating for their highest needs. They have been doing an excellent job. I believe the budget is in good hands and going in the right direction.

J.R. Allen: The City Council has final approval of the City budget. I have read through the budget printed in our local paper several times. To most of us it is an endless line item document that incorporates the library, water, police, administration, employees, capital expenses, operating costs, and total income to the City. As a citizen like you not being on the Budget Committee I don't have all the information. If elected I will do my best to fully educate myself on every aspect before voting to approve the final adopted budget.

Michael Seager: I have been on the Budget Committee for 4 years. In that time the City has been able to move forward and operate within budget and has even been able to save money in a contingency fund for 4 consecutive years. We are able to pay our bills which in the not too distant past were questionable. Financially the City is in a better position than it has been in the past years.

Dale Webb: I sat on the Budget Committee for the first time last year, but actually have been giving input and highly aware of the water and sewer budgets for a number of years as a member of the Public Works Committee. It used to be that the rates determined the budgets, we have now corrected that and the budgets now determine the rates. I have also sat through rate structure reviews by outside vendors of our water and sewer budgets and have an extensive knowledge of how the rates work and how they are formulated, and pushed hard to have our staff have the ability to conduct internal rate reviews themselves, instead

of relying on expensive outside vendor reviews. I have sat on the City's Rate Review Committee the last two years. I was successful at the last Budget Committee in shifting more monies into our street fund for needed street repairs.

4. Please describe your views on the current state of the City of Vernonia? What do you think is working well? What are the specific priorities, issues, or concerns you would like to try to address if you are elected?

Rick Hobart: I am both encouraged and optimistic as to the current state of our City. The completion of the new waste treatment facility and our new health center are huge assets. New small businesses are up and running contributing to a stronger economy.

Jill Hult: I believe the current state of Vernonia is good. Vernonia has a strong, dedicated volunteer base especially in the City Advisory Committees. I understand their immense contributions and tireless work to make good, sound recommendations to the Council. This needs to continue to be honored and recognized. While there always seems to be a need for more volunteers, I do think the community comes together on most occasions for the right reasons. I also believe that while there have been some staffing changes, the City Administrator is doing an amazing job and the staff is well qualified to do their jobs. I believe my fellow Councilors share my philosophy that our positions are to try and do the most good for the most people with the information and resources we have at the time. We also must continue to see the problem areas and be willing to tackle them head on. My hope is to support the needs of the City, its community members, and its visitors in the most effective way possible with the resources we have and to look for opportunities to become more fruitful while being fiscally responsible to the community as well. The Council and City Administrator just had a workshop on projects and there were 47 items on our list. Some of these can be done simultaneously and some will be done in order of priority or function. Two of the major projects are the Senior Center/Vernonia Cares Food Bank and the sale of the Cemetery House. As Councilor, and hopefully Mayor, I would like to continue to be a voice for Vernonia

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An Introduction to the Catholic Faith



Follow Fr. Clifton, the new priest at St. Mary's Catholic Church, as he explains the basic beliefs of the Catholic Faith in this four-part series.

- Thurs. Oct 4th: Reasons to Believe: The Existence of God**
- Thurs. Oct. 11th: The Scriptures: Inspired or Man-made?**
- Thurs. Oct. 18th: Jesus Christ: Human and Divine**
- Thurs. Oct. 25th: The Catholic Church**

Each presentation will take place from 6:30-7:30pm

Q&A to follow

St. Mary's Catholic Church
960 Missouri Ave, Vernonia

"The difficulty of 'explaining why I am a Catholic' is that there are ten thousand reasons all amounting to one reason: that Catholicism is true"

- G.K. Chesterton

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*Gracie the Boxer is a Paid Spokes-Puppy
Steve and Gracie live in Vernonia*

