

from the editor

As we head into the heart of the holiday season, I would like to send out a thank you to all the folks who helped decorate the downtown and make the community look so festive. Thanks to the Intercultural Society of Vernonia, the Spirit of Christmas Committee, and of course, the Vernonia Freewheelers, for helping spark the spirit of the season in a year when we all really needed it.

2020 has probably been the most challenging year we all have faced collectively. Here at *Vernonia's Voice* we have shared in that struggle, but we also have a lot to be grateful for. This newspaper is a collaboration, and we are lucky to have a wonderful community to work with here.

We would like to send out a big thank you to all our advertisers, without whom we could not publish this newspaper. Your commitment to this business is what has kept us going for the last 14 years.

Council Votes to Return to Virtual Meetings

At their November 16 City Council meeting, Council held a long discussion and then voted 3-2 to begin holding in-person meetings, after meeting virtually since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

After voting to begin in-person meetings, the December 7 meeting had to be changed to a virtual meeting after City Hall was closed to the public when new state restrictions took effect on November 19.

The Council reversed course at their December 7 meeting, after adding it to the agenda at the request of Councilor Bruce McNair. After the discussion Council voted unanimously 5-0 to return to virtual meetings. The next public meeting is scheduled for January 4.

Councilor McNair stated he had reconsidered his position on the issue after the original vote and a conversation with City Administrator Josette Mitchell, who expressed she had concerns about meeting in-person due to personal health risks. McNair said he probably made his original decision to support in-person meetings "based on emotion, rather than common sense, given the politics of the last year or so, and I let that color my thinking." He questioned

And to our contributors, the folks who regularly provide us with content that keeps us informed about our community – our history, our watershed, our yards and gardens, our schools, our senior citizens, and our safety.

And finally, to you our readers. This year we decided to take a chance and ask those who could afford to do so, to help share the burden of publishing this paper with our advertisers. The response has been heartening, as well as surprising and reassuring – it helps affirm that people do value and support our small town community newspaper. Thank you!

Here's wishing all of you the happiest of holidays and a season of love and good cheer, and hopefully a better new year, full of health, peace, and hope.

Scott Laird
Editor and Publisher

whether he had the right to make that decision for those involved in city business, and said the Council had an obligation to the community to set a good example in their actions. He said city staff and the community need to feel safe in the meeting and work environment. He acknowledged that he was well aware of City Administrator Mitchell's health concerns, and that his decision to vote for in-person meetings "was just thoughtless."

Councilor J.R. Allen asked Councilor McNair if his concerns were influenced by the "hit job in the paper," an apparent reference to an article in the November 19 issue of *Vernonia's Voice* which reported on the decision. McNair said he was not, and said he understands that people are concerned.

Council discussed McNair's statement, and other Council members raised concerns about the increased COVID case numbers and issues at area hospitals, inaccessibility and the disenfranchisement for the general citizenry during in-person meetings, the safety of staff and the public, and that two new Councilors-elect, who will join the Council in January, did not have input in the decision.

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reflecting the spirit of our community

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*May we all find comfort and joy
this holiday season and in 2021*

Vernonia's Voice