

Public forum

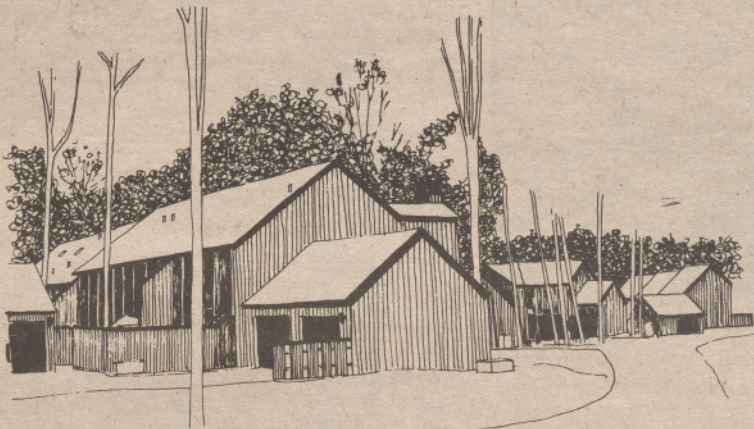
It's time I said something but it is also time I get this paper to the printers so I will pick a small subject and peck at it.

There is going to be some screaming about the City Budget and there are already murmurs about the Police budget in particular. The police dept. is being hit with the same problems that all depts. are loss of federal funds. But there is a lesson to be learned here. We abdicated our responsibility and let the "man" take care of us. It was an interim measure and the interim bill is coming due.

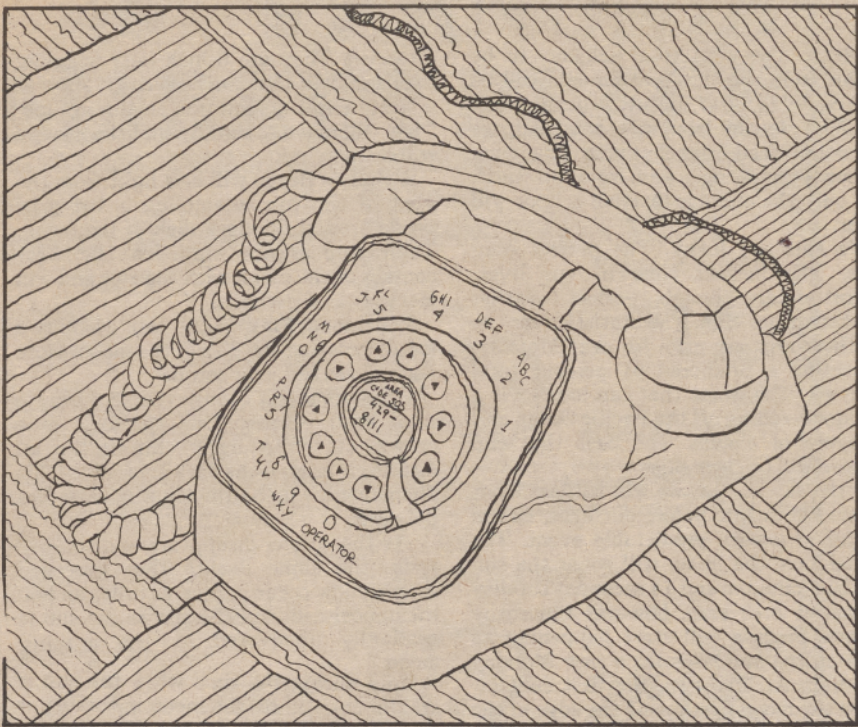
If we say that we have social or civil problems, primarily vandalism, then we hire more police and say here you take care of it. Aren't we doing the same thing—abdication of our responsibility?

If a segment of the youth in our community are a social problem then it is due to the culture they live in. If the culture our community presents itself as, gives youngsters the inspiration to be vandals then we should do something to improve our cultural identity rather than try to have one watchdog per individual to make sure all of us are civil at all times. As our budget reflects that becomes impractical.

Ned



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Planning and politics

by Paul Seamons

For years now Columbia County has struggled to reach a political consensus on land use planning. Many proposals have come and gone, many changes in direction have occurred.

Planning efforts here have proceeded like a drunk on the way home from the tavern: incoherent, disjointed, staggering, stumbling. It must be getting embarrassing for the county commissioners. The planning effort has not exactly been a political or managerial success. Land use planning is the hottest political potato in town; the commissioners juggle it back and forth, trying not to get burned.

Commissioner Hunt has doggedly, if reluctantly, directed the planning department for the last couple of years. He has been hesitant to identify himself too strongly with planning or with any particular plan for fear of political damage to himself. He knows that countywide planning and zoning are inevitable. I suspect he sees them as desirable.

Commissioner Ahlborn has not involved himself in the county planning controversies. He appears more than happy to concentrate his efforts on supervising the road department.

Commissioner Sahagian, newly installed on the Board last month, seems to see herself as a representative of the more reactionary and obstructionist end of planning's political spectrum. Her actions and statements appeal to the more hard-line anti-planners and free marketeers. She is playing (or overplaying) "champion of the people."

Pinched between a state law which requires land use planning and a county population extremely suspicious of state programs in general and land use planning in particular, the commissioners have had a difficult task indeed. Rapid turnover of personnel in the county planning department has made their job even tougher. The board has been confronted with almost unresolvable political problems. But resolve them it must.

In the past years the commissioners have heard hours and hours of public testimony. They have heard dozens of private gripes. They have received the input of the CPAC's on a variety of issues. They have the benefit of county counsel's advice. They also know or should know how firmly established the LCDC is in this state.

Presumably the commissioners are political experts. They should have the ability to take the factual situation, the public sentiments and the political realities at hand and from them synthesize a county comprehensive plan that makes political sense.

It is time for the commissioners, individually or in concert, to step out in front of the planning issue and exercise constructive leadership. With the planning department, they should develop a proposed plan that they, the commissioners, can support and promote as a reasonable compromise among the various political approaches to planning. We need proposals that the commissioners will endorse, not apologize for.

The commissioners, Mrs. Sahagian in particular, do their constituents a disservice by stalling the planning process in hopes that through LCDC compliance date extensions and various legal and bureaucratic appeals we can put off the day of reckoning indefinitely. The board know that none of the appeal routes currently contemplated have much chance of success. Encouraging people to believe otherwise needlessly polarizes the issue further. This makes it even more difficult to obtain the political consensus which will ultimately be necessary.

The commissioners must exercise leadership in these planning matters and deliver us from the deepening morass of political stalemate.

Citizens of Vernonia:

We must not give in to the apathy that has plagued other communities throughout the world. It is necessary to stand firm in our beliefs together as a community. Citizens for a better Vernonia must speak out now, or another year will go by and things will be worse.

It is vital that we vote on and pass a city budget this year that reflects the best interests of this town. Without a budget, stagnation will be felt by many. The sewer must be fixed—it is a black mark for this town. Those who think that you can stop growth by ignoring the sewer are foolish to think so. Growth will come, the question is whether or not Vernonia will be a nice place for people to live in five, ten or twenty years from now. Will our children want or be able to live here?

It is truly our responsibility. To not participate in the process is to allow others to make the choices for you.

Let's get together and make Vernonia great! Come to the budget meeting on February 26th. See you there.

Yours Truly,
Norman Jensen

For more information call me at 429-9811.

Dear People of Vernonia,

Do you want the federal government to come into Vernonia and put a sewer system in that will be very expensive and a great burden financially to every property owner in Vernonia? They do, they can, and they will if we don't take care of it ourselves.

Do you want Vernonia to hire another policeman to arrest the growing number of bored teenagers (and adults) for causing trouble because there is nothing else to do? Or would you like the same money to go toward a healthy community center or perhaps an indoor swimming

pool?

Do you want better services for old and disabled citizens?

Do you want a larger library?

Do you want the town to stay the same?

What do you want? Speak out for heavens sake! Your ideas and opinions are wanted and needed. Don't let someone else make these decisions for you. This country and this town were established with the belief that people wanted a say in the way their taxes are spent.

Well people, here is your chance, don't waste your time complaining, please come and tell people how you want your money spent. Freedom isn't free, it takes your time. Attend the Budget meeting on February 26. Please care, get together with your neighbors, and make decisions for your town.

So let's get together just like the old days and talk and plan.

Patti Jensen

