

Church tells plans for housing Asian refugees at old Condon air base

Unemployment Insurance to drop for employers

By Jean Gilliam
Condon correspondent

"Earnest money has been paid and it will be out of escrow Dec. 6," Don Nicholson, coordinator for the East Hill Four-Square Gospel Church, told the Gilliam County Planning Commission recently. The Portland-area church, through Ministries Unlimited, made known its plans in October to purchase the former Condon Air Force Station for use as a refugee training center. Paul Vaden is the present owner of the property.

The meeting Nov. 19 was the first time that a representative of the church had met with the planning commission and there were many questions to be answered.

"It is a solid commitment as far as we are concerned," Nicholson told the commission. "Our plans are to move Caucasian people from our church, who would like to move to the base, to help orient the refugees who will be coming here. The first family would like to move in Dec. 10. Some other families plan to move here Feb. 1 and by March 1, we would like to bring in seven to ten Vietnamese families."

Nicholson continued, "In the early part of summer we would like to bring in more families. We will only bring in as many as we can take care of as it will depend on how many Caucasian families we can get. We plan on one Caucasian family for every three or four refugee families. We do not know when we will be ready to use the barracks and the mess hall."

At this point Nicholson was told that only the 27 houses on the base were in the subdivision which is zoned residential. A public hearing would be needed for a conditional use permit to use the base proper for residences, as it is presently zoned industrial. Also it would be necessary to have inspections by the Department of Environmental Quality, state fire marshal and building inspector.

A representative of the Department of Commerce, which issues building permits, was also present and said that two of the houses, which had been remodeled last year, had fire places which were considered hazardous.

When asked about schooling, Nicholson replied, "Since the refugee families will only be here for a few months, I feel it would be best to keep the children at the base and teach them there."

As to health problems, Nicholson said, "The Vietnamese will be quarantined and given TB tests. They will not be released into the community until we learn the results of these tests."

Nicholson also was asked about the tax situation. He said that Ministries Unlimited is a nonprofit organization and he presumed it would be tax-free until the government does something about it.

Although there are apparently state and federal funds to help with refugee projects, Nicholson said, "We are not using refugees as a means to get state funds. We are hoping that we can operate this free and clear of state or federal funds."

"We felt that we were doing God's will to help the refugees of the world when we bought this. We realize that this is not the way to go into business with so many unknown factors. Our purpose is not to evangelize but to give these people a Christian life style. We are asking people in Condon to have faith in us to help these people."

Nicholson was asked how long the church expected to be training refugees and he said, "It is projected that in ten years from now, the

refugee problem will be 25 percent greater than it is now."

Although it was pointed out earlier in the meeting that the subdivision ordinance calls for single-family ownership and single family occupancy, Ni-

cholson was told that the 27 houses on the base were in the subdivision which is zoned residential. A public hearing would be needed for a conditional use permit to use the base proper for residences, as it is presently zoned industrial. Also it would be necessary to have inspections by the Department of Environmental Quality, state fire marshal and building inspector.

More than 41 percent of Oregon eligible employers who pay unemployment insurance (U.I.) taxes will pay at the lowest rate (2.2 percent) possible under Employment Division law in 1980.

"The unemployment insurance tax rates charged to Oregon employers, (51,635 now eligible) will drop from a

range of 2.6 percent to 4 percent in 1979 to a range of 2.2 percent to 3.6 percent in 1980, the first such drop possible for the past four years," said Ray Thorne, administrator for the Employment Division.

"And new employers will pay U.I. taxes at a 3.3 percent rate in 1980 compared with 3.5 percent in 1979," Thorne said.

Thorne said 1980 U.I. tax rate notices are being mailed now to a total of 64,425 Oregon employers.

The reduction in tax rates, Thorne said, is possible because of a combination of responsible action by the Oregon Legislature, a strong

economy and careful policing of each claim by Employment Division staff with a concerted effort to get unemployed people back to work. This combination allowed the Unemployment Trust Fund to build a level where taxes could be reduced as stipulated in the law.

A total of 21,600 employers

will qualify for the new lower 2.2 percent rate. In 1979 an employer with the lowest tax rate (2.6 percent) is paying \$234 in taxes on those employees earning \$9,000 or more per year. In 1980 an employer at the lowest tax rate will pay \$220 for those employees that are paid \$10,000 or more. Thorne said.

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