

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

"Deal" harms City's ability to attract jobs

Following comment here (March 18) on the negative aspects of an agreement the Vernonia city administrator, attorney and mayor made with a Beaverton building contractor that allows the siting of a manufactured home in an industrial zone, another citizen made it abundantly clear that we had missed the mark by failing to adequately explain the zoning ordinance.

The ordinance says that, in an industrial zone, an acceptable conditional use is for a "dwelling unit or mobile home accessory to a permitted use such as accommodations for a caretaker or night watchman." This says quite plainly that if there is a functioning industrial operation in the industrial zone and if it is the type of operation that needs a caretaker or watchman, then the operator can apply for a conditional use permit. It does not allow siting any sort of residence prior to establishment of an acceptable industrial use...even if that residence is not being occupied.

This agreement is also likely to complicate efforts to attract industry to Vernonia because industries, especially those that provide family wage jobs, understandably want to locate in an area that is designed for industry, not homes. This means that local residents will continue to commute to jobs elsewhere, which means they will continue to shop and dine elsewhere, which means the benefits of locally earned income will not exist in Vernonia.

This "deal" violates the city's own ordinance and, without a doubt, it has violated the public trust by being signed without approval by the City Council.

It's time to take a new look at nuisance abatement

As we head for the annual city-wide clean-up, it's obvious that more people are involved in improving the community. At the same time, there are increasing numbers of nuisances that should be brought into compliance. There are unlicensed cars on the streets, an auto repair business is operating in a residential zone, there are buildings that need to be either fenced off or removed. Unlicensed and inoperable cars are again multiplying at residences and businesses; some businesses are just plain messy, with useable and non-useable equipment unnecessarily strewn about.

If the nuisance abatement ordinance is not applied, it won't help keep the city in presentable condition.

Council still has a vacancy

If you are interested in getting involved in city government, there couldn't be a better time. With the resignation of Don Amundson, there is a vacancy that will be filled by the existing council.

There are two days left to apply. The closing date is April 3, 1998.

On Monday, April 6, the applicants will go through a public question and answer process during the council meeting. Whether you apply or not, it's a meeting worth attending.



City Scene

By Julius Dalzell
Vernonia City Council

The Shay and Other Topics

There are a number of hot topics that could benefit from your ideas, opinions, input and involvement. In this column, we'll talk mostly about the Shay locomotive, but make mention of those other items for emphasis. Undoubtedly, they will be presented in future articles.

Many of you know a whole lot more than this writer about the history of the engine and maybe can remember the day it was placed on permanent display in Shay Park. In 1992 the City Council agreed to begin the lengthy process of restoring the locomotive to operation, with that activity to be facilitated by the Vernonia Restoration and Preservation Association (VPRA).

A lot of activity has taken place since that time, with boiler removal and disassembly of the framing and wheels being the remaining requirements. Access to major components has shown that the elements have taken their toll. Advanced and unanticipated deterioration was found in many instances. In other words, the restoration will entail a much larger effort than originally thought. The good news is that restoration will add longevity to this rather large artifact.

The situation today is one of determining the City's preference for moving ahead with restoration, such as determining at what location, that could best proceed. In assuming that the engine will be restored to full operation, a related series of questions pertain to where a short line might be laid for proceeding with a small tourist railroad opera-

tion. As can be readily understood, each phase of the program will entail hundreds of hours of volunteer effort and many dollars!

Tim Anderson, as head of the restoration effort, presented details in a well-documented plan, at a March 2 meeting of the City Council, for their consideration and approval. The Plan entails significant decision-making in the manner of endorsing some, or all components of the venture. As a starting point, there is the fundamental need of selecting a location for restoration. Preference should, seemingly, be given to any locations where restoration activity could be readily viewed, and individuals encouraged to participate.

Although not mentioned in the Plan, one option might be to terminate activities at the point of achieving a quality static display with depot et al. The Plan today, however, is to proceed with some level of operation, if not on a few hundred feet of track, possibly a few miles. The benefits of operation would be attraction and tourism, and the economic contributions that would flow to local businesses by having people come to view the train and ride the "rail." In this regard, location would be most important.

So the questions include:

(i) where do we locate the Shay for restoration? A heated, lighted building is a must if we are ever to complete the task, and Shay Park does not offer the space needed. It should also be mentioned that a number of citizens have expressed a desire to have Shay Park transformed into a true memorial park with benches, landscaping, etc. Undoubtedly this will be a topic of discussion in conjunction with the

soon to be launched Master Planning activity.

(ii) how far should we proceed with plans to operate the Shay? And if a tourist line were to be constructed, what should be the routing? There are many considerations that go into such a venture, considerations that must be part of the decision-making process.

Your ideas and comments are most welcome. You can get in touch with Tim Anderson or myself through City Hall, if not directly. Other members of the Council would like to hear your thoughts, as well.

Another reason the Shay is a timely topic is because of the ongoing planning for the design and construction of the new City Hall and Library. Might the Shay be a complementary companion on the old railroad grade? This is also a reminder that April 15 is a red letter day for finalizing the City Hall and Library building designs and layouts. A supreme effort will be made to acquire your input. Visit the Library during the afternoon of the 15th to view and discuss the options being considered. We intend to complete the design phase by the end of April so now is the time to get involved.

And don't forget, there are still two days remaining in which you can apply for the vacant City Council position. Friday, April 3rd, is the deadline.

Your voice is heard when you speak from the ballot box.

April 28 is the last day to register for the May 19, 1998, Primary Election