

Vernonia Council hears ways to change vacant downtown buildings

Vernonia City Council held a workshop at the beginning of their August 15 meeting to discuss vacant or warehoused structures in the downtown business district. Jeff Bennett, attorney at Jordan Schrader PC, told council there are three basic alternatives to getting more downtown buildings occupied; one is to use the city nuisance ordinance, though that only gets owners to repair dangerous buildings. Bennett said he "wouldn't recommend this as an effective means of getting buildings back into the marketplace unless they have lots of trash inside or vermin," because the owners can clean them up and still not rent or sell.

Another alternative, with similar problems, is to use the building code on dangerous buildings. Once again, this just addresses safety issues.

A third alternative is to use eminent domain, whereby the city can take a building to fur-

ther a plan for development. "Use this judiciously and carefully," Bennett said, "as it can be perceived as being unfairly applied and you can make enemies, but if you have an economic development plan, it can be done." Another element identified with the use of eminent domain is that the city must have funds to pay the owner fair market value for any property taken in this way.

Another method identified is through development of an Urban Renewal District. This can be expensive to set up and can also be politically charged as there are taxes levied to make this happen.

Bennett went on to say that trying to gain building owners' cooperation is a good way to start and will work in some cases. Some cities are adopting plans that offer tax incentives instead of tax penalties, offering owners tax abatement for a specific period if the owners al-

low the building to be occupied. Council decided that, short term, they want to meet and talk with building owners. For a long term, they would like to see an economic development plan or Urban Renewal District set up.

Rebecca McGaugh gave an update on the status of wildlife at Vernonia Lake since the Jamboree fireworks, reporting that the family of wood ducks and the young green herons are gone, only a fraction of the red-winged blackbirds remain and the fireworks ignited a small fire on property across the Nehalem River that was put out by property owners. McGaugh said she hoped the council would soon adopt a resolution banning fireworks at the lake. Casey Mitchell spoke up with an alternative view, saying the fireworks were fantastic, that he walks around the lake every day and is still seeing herons and blackbirds and that

he hopes the fireworks are held at the lake again.

Vernonia Senior Center President Bill James told council that the Center's board of directors decided, by one vote, that they would prefer the new center be built on property by Vernonia Lake. City Administrator Robyn Bassett will meet with the owners of the property, seniors and Community Action Team personnel, to start finding ways to bring roads and utilities to the site.

Council tabled a written request from Vernonia School District Superintendent Michael Funderburg for a credit against development charges for the new school building. The request was based on the fact that Lincoln Grade School existed before development charges were implemented and that the new school is a replacement. Council will review the appropriate ordinances and consider this request at the

next meeting.

In a vote with only Councilor Randy Parrow opposed, System Development Charges (SDC) were increased from \$6,311 to \$7,826 for new development. On a table showing SDCs in nine Oregon cities with populations under 5,000, Vernonia currently charges less than all but one city. The most expensive was St. Paul, with SDCs of \$14,500. Development charges help pay for streets, stormwater, water, wastewater and parks.

In other business, council approved the loan of a city backhoe and operator to get utilities to the Booster building behind the school – the Boosters have free paving coming but need the utilities dug in first.

Council approved Vernonia Police Chief Workman's request to declare one of the police cars surplus so it can be sold, and heard that Jamboree

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Community Calendar

AUGUST 2005							SEPTEMBER 2005							OCTOBER 2005						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	25	26	27	28	29	30	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	
28	29	30	31										30	31						

VERNONIA

Alcoholics Anonymous	Mondays	6:30 p.m., Head Start Bldg.
Alcoholics Anonymous	Saturdays	7:00 p.m., Head Start Bldg.
American Legion Post #119	2nd Thursday	627 Adams Avenue
Arts & Crafts Society	2nd Thursday	2:00 p.m., City Library
Booster Club	2nd Wednesday	7:00 p.m., VHS Library
Boy Scout Troop 201	Tuesdays	7:00 p.m., Scout Cabin
Boy Scout Troop 860	Wednesdays	7:00 p.m., LDS Church
Cemetery Beautification Comm.	2nd Thursday	7:00 p.m., Leonetti's Grill
CERT	4th Wednesday	For Info Call 503-429-6033
Chamber of Commerce	2nd Wednesday	For Info Call 503-429-6081
Community Coalition	2nd Monday	12:30 p.m. School District Ofc.
Cub Scout Pack 201	Scout Cabin	For Info Call 503-429-8133
Doll Club	4th Tuesday	1:00 p.m., Senior Center
Friends of the Library	1st Tuesday	7:00 p.m., Vernonia Library
Hands On Art Committee	1st & 3rd Thursdays	7:00 p.m., Head Start Bldg.
Izaak Walton League	3rd Thursday	For location call 503-429-7193
Lions Club	1st & 3rd Tuesdays	6:30 p.m., Buckhorn Restaurant
Nehalem Valley Car Club		For Info Call 503-429-4074
Pioneer Museum		For Info Call 503-429-3713
Preschool Story Hour	Mondays	10:30 a.m., City Library
Upper Nehalem C.P.A.C.	2nd Tuesday	7:00 p.m., City Hall
Venturing Crew 201	1st & 3rd Thursdays	5:30 p.m., Buckhorn Restaurant
Vernonia Airport Committee	3rd Wednesday	7:00 p.m., City Hall
Vernonia Cares Directors		For Info call 503-429-1414
Vernonia City Council	1st & 3rd Mondays	7:00 p.m., City Hall
Vernonia Community PTA	3rd Thursday	6:30 p.m., WGS Library
Vernonia Grange	4th Saturday	10:30 a.m., Grange Hall
Vernonia Health Center	2nd Monday	6:00 p.m., 510 Bridge St.
Vernonia Planning Comm.	1st & 3rd Thursdays	7:00 p.m., City Hall
Vernonia Pride	3rd Thursday	1:00 p.m., City Hall
Vernonia Ridge Riders	Last Thursday	7:00 p.m., Senior Center
Vernonia RFPD Board	2nd Tuesday	7:00 p.m., Fire Station
Vernonia School Board	2nd Thursday	6:00 p.m., District Office
Vernonia Sr. Center Board	3rd Friday	1:00 p.m., Senior Center
Vern. Volunteer Ambulance Assoc.	1st Thursday	7:00 p.m., Fire Station
Vernonia Volunteer Firefighters	2nd Monday	7:00 p.m., Fire Station
WOEC Directors	3rd Tuesday	7:00 p.m., WOEC

MIST-BIRKENFELD

M-BRFPD Board Business Mtg.	2nd Tuesday	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
M-BRFPD Board Workshop	4th Tuesday	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
M-B Ambulance Drill	1st & 2nd Thursdays	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
M-B Fire Drill	1st & 2nd Wednesdays	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
M-B Helping Circle	2nd Monday	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
M-B SAR Drill	3rd Wednesday	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
M-B Volunteer Assoc.	1st Tuesday	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
Natal Grange	2nd Wednesday	7:30 p.m., Natal Grange Hall
T.O.P.S.	Mondays	6:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
Upr Nehalem Watershed Council	For date call 429-2401	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station

BANKS

Alcoholics Anonymous	Fridays	8:00 p.m., Methodist Church
American Legion Post #90	2nd Tuesdays	7:30 p.m., Main Street Post
Banks City Council	2nd Tuesday	7:30 p.m., City Hall
Banks Fire District #13	2nd Wednesday	7:00 p.m., Station 13
Banks Planning Commission	Last Tuesday	7:00 p.m., City Hall
Banks School Board	2nd Monday	7:30 p.m., Jr. High Library
Banks Youth Group	Sundays, Wednesdays	7:00 p.m., UMC Youth Bldg.
Chamber of Commerce	1st Thursday	12:30 p.m., Fire District Office
CPO 14	3rd Monday	7:00 p.m., City Library
Friends of the Library	2nd Tuesday	7:00 p.m., City Library
Lions Club	1st & 3rd Mondays	7:00 p.m., Brown Derby
Sunset Park Assoc.	3rd Wednesday	8:00 p.m., Gun Club
T.O.P.S.	Wednesdays	7:00 p.m., Administration Bldg.
Women's Aglow	2nd Thursday	7:00 p.m., City Library

COLUMBIA COUNTY (All meet in St. Helens unless otherwise noted.)

Board of Commissioners	Wednesdays	10 a.m., Courthouse
Citizens for Senior Justice	2nd Tuesday	7:00 p.m., Sunset Park Church
Columbia Soil & Water District	3rd Wednesday	7:30 p.m., NRCS, 2514 Sykes
County Fair Board	2nd Monday	7:00 p.m., Fairgrounds 4-H Bldg.
County Parks Commission	3rd Monday	6:00 p.m., 1054 Oregon St.
Mental Health Advisory Comm.	3rd Tuesday	10 a.m., 2nd Floor, Courthouse
Comm. on Children & Families	3rd Thursday	5:30 p.m. OSU Ext., 550 N. Hwy. 30
Local Alcohol & Drug Plann. Comm.	2nd Tuesday	3:00 p.m., 2nd Floor, Courthouse

Organizations and meeting dates not listed may be included by calling 429-9410 or by mail to The INDEPENDENT, 725 Bridge Street, Vernonia, OR 97064.