

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

— Guest Editorial —

This is real entertainment

By Scott Laird

The Vernonia City Council met February 5 for its regular Monday meeting. The first part of the meeting was a workshop on a supplemental budget being proposed by city administrator Dick Kline. The handful of citizens who bothered to show up got no song and dance, and no dog and pony show. They got cold hard facts. And it wasn't pretty.

The City of Vernonia has some financial problems. As Kline explained, we've gotten ourselves into a bit of a situation, and it's going to take some hard work to dig ourselves out. But Kline also expressed optimism about those prospects and, over the next 2+ hours, explained how he is working to reorganize and simplify the city budget, making it more transparent and understandable in the future. He also introduced a balanced supplemental budget for the rest of this fiscal year that will allow the city to start the new year, July 1, with its head above water. There is still lots of work to do, and that next budget will not be pretty, but Kline is hopeful and positive about the situation.

What was disturbing about this presentation was not the city's financial situation; we've been hearing that the city was in trouble for months. What was disturbing was the very few citizens who were there to find out what the facts are. This is not a televised talent show or voyeuristic peek into a celebrity's life. This is our reality, what is happening in our town and, unlike television shows that look into the lives of strangers, this affects each and every one of us.

In this town, the local news is published only twice a month. Rumors, gossip, and hearsay are how most of us hear what's going on. Rumors, gossip and hearsay usually lead to misinformation, which can lead to mistrust, blaming, finger pointing, and complaining. Which leads to neighbors turning against each other.

The Vernonia City Council and the Planning Commission meet twice each month. The Parks Committee, Public Works Committee, Learning Center Board, School Board and Fire Board meet on a regular basis and all these meetings are open to the public. These public meetings provide opportunities for citizens to become informed, to hear the facts and learn what's

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a Yellow Rose of Texas



becomes another

Pink Star

STATISTIC

MOLLY IVINS
1944-2007

IT'S NOT A
MATTER OF
WHETHER WE
WILL LOSE OR
WE ARE LOSING.
WE HAVE
LOST!



Out of My Mind . . .

By Noni Andersen

Last month's column, about a Virginia congressman whose bigoted comments regarding a Muslim congressman displayed his ignorance of the U.S. Constitution, started me thinking about the faiths of our 43 presidents.

They were all Christians, but their faiths ranged over a wide swath of Christianity.

Fourteen presidents were Episcopalians, 10 were Presbyterians, five were Methodists. There were four Baptists and four Unitarians, three Disciples of Christ, two each were Dutch Reformed, Quaker or Congregationalist, and one Catholic.

Three presidents cited no specific denomination and six changed from their original affiliation to other denominations. President Dwight Eisenhower, for instance, was raised initially in the River Brethren, a Mennonite sect, then as a Jehovah's Witness. In February, 1953, he was baptized and joined the Presbyterian church just weeks after his first inauguration as president.

Last week, when former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney, a Mormon, announced his candidacy for president, questions started flying about his religion. The same thing happened in 1960 when John F. Kennedy, a Catholic, ran for the presidency.

Adding to questions about presidential candidates are Sen. Hillary Clinton, not the first woman candidate, but the first "serious" woman candidate; Sen. Barack Obama, who is mixed race and considered "black" by many, or not black enough, by some; and New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson, who is hispanic.

There are many Jewish senators and congressmen, but Sen. Joseph Lieberman is the only Jew to run on a national ticket (Gore-Lieberman, 2000).

There are also many Mormon senators and congressmen, including Oregon Sen. Gordon Smith. Nevada Sen. Harry Reid is Majority Leader of the Senate, and the highest ranking Mormon in U.S. government.

Some who object to Obama, say he is hiding his "radical Muslim" schooling, a claim that is both false and easily refuted. He is a member of the United Church of Christ. Clinton is a Methodist and Richardson is Catholic.

Why are race, religion and gender dominant considerations? Are Americans so immature that race, religion and gender are more important than a candidate's qualifications for president? Our history during campaigns and at the polls would indicate so.

If we really looked at qualifications, Richardson would be a top contender. Now in his second term as governor, his experience includes 15 years in Congress, in addition to serving as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, and energy secretary in the Clinton cabinet.

In contrast, Romney is campaigning as a non-politician, which has always struck me as a truly humorous claim by anyone running for office.

Women have held the top spot in Britain and India. Ireland has had at least two Jewish presidents. Why are we so frightened?

Politics is called "the art of the possible." In the U.S., that art looks like "paint by the numbers."