

Letters

Taxpayers need info city tries to withhold

To the Editor:

Having read discouraging and disparaging remarks with regard to development of the Learning Center and our newspaper's attempt to get definitive information, I attended the Friday, May 4, meeting anticipating and hoping that our council, city manager and persons from the paper were going to resolve the conflict. They were to discuss how best to provide city information to the reporters of the newspaper in order to not have further conflicting interactions. The meeting addressed that element, then ignored it and turned to policy-forming with visitor input. This was truly a disappointment for me, as I think it is necessary for apologies from the city. Others in the audience expressed similar feelings since it was obvious the publisher and owner of *The Independent* was not directly addressed.

I have great respect for the accuracy of our newspaper be-

cause our taxpayers need the city information in order to participate in the committees that help make Vernonia shine.

I would compare *The Independent* owners' way of obtaining news articles to the OPB news I listen to on radio. The Independent's passion for honesty and truth is the same as that shown by OPB. We have had a free newspaper for 22 years with these standards.

We need to be informed accurately to support the terrific new ideas and desires that the city receives from its citizens.

At this point, I think we need to remember our feeling for each other when we had the flood – working together, and communicating is so necessary in all 'families.'

**Isabelle McDaniel
Vernonia**

Volunteering at VCLC has been rewarding

To the Editor:

About a month ago I met Jessica Jones (Director, VCLC) for the first time. After learning

that I had skills in network administration and computer repair she asked me to consider volunteering at the learning center. After talking to Jesse at length, I realized how desperate she was for someone with my skills and I couldn't turn down the offer. I toured the computer lab and right off the bat Jesse put me to work setting up a printer. I was surprised to learn how much work Jesse put into the lab, but that motivated me to help out even more.

Working at the Learning Center has been an amazing opportunity for me and I wanted the community to know how important the Center is. I feel that the Vernonia Community Learning Center is one of the best things to happen to our community in my lifetime, Jesse Jones is one of the most dedicated and caring individuals I have ever met. Being at VCLC I've learned about some of the great things VCLC is doing, like offering PCC classes. How great would it be to go to community college without leaving town? This is just one of the progressive goals of the VCLC. It would be a shame if our community ever lost VCLC, and I want to encourage everyone in Vernonia to support VCLC.

Also, I understand the need of our citizens to know about the city's financial state, and I support transparency in government but I urge you to be patient. The people at VCLC are working hard for this community. I think it would be a mistake to judge VCLC and City Hall too harshly because the benefits of a successful VCLC are so important to this community. Thank you!

**Corey Hooker
Volunteer VCLC**

Local (child) authors still being enjoyed

To the Editor:

As I was going through my classroom library at Woodriver Elementary in Fairbanks, Alaska, I realized that the books that are the most popular with my first graders are the books that were written and hand-made by some of my third grade students in Vernonia back in 1992 or so.

My current first graders love

reading "My Electric Father" by Dustin Titus, "Midnight" by Nicole Gwin, "Looney Tunes" by Matt Schill, "The Basketball Game" by Dylan West, "The Tiger Book" by Jennifer Wise, "Go-Carts" by Orion Sword, "The Monster Tale," by Karmen Colby, "Tigers" by Dustin Titus, "My Pets" by Joel Gregg, "Me and Milly" by Jennifer Bernardi, "The Horse Named Shalom" by Katie Prpich, and "Night of the Destroyers" by Matt Peters.

I thought these former third graders (now adults) would enjoy knowing that their writing is still being appreciated many years later by first grade students in Fairbanks, Alaska.

Thanks,

**Ken Brown
Woodrive Elementary School
Fairbanks, Alaska**

Help Vernonia Lake before harm worsens

To the Editor:

A recent Vernonia sewer/water bill announced options to take care of sewage wastewater (effluent) as: building up the walls of the lagoons, irrigating the golf course or putting the effluent into the Vernonia Lake. Because of cost and engineering factors, the Lake is being explored as the option using a membrane system to filter the effluent. Even though it is said the effluent is cleaner than the lake and 'just like drinking water,' I want to know what this wastewater contains in the 3 months pilot testing of the membrane system with Kennedy Jencks engineering firm, if tests are truly representative in case of system failure, flooding, etc., and what history other locales have had, if indeed anyone has put it into an 'impound pond' where an ecosystem has been developed with fish, eagles, osprey, river otters, ducks, swans, etc.

My concerns would be:

1. Compounds in the wastewater creating a process known as eutrophication, which increase algae and plant growth, depleting the oxygen

and killing animal life. The algae growing on top of the water in this process smells bad, and would further impact use of the trails, etc.

2. Public health issues that may change the use of the lake in regards to fishing. Perhaps a catch and release policy would have to be implemented. Currently effluent is discharged into the Nehalem River, making Vernonia out of compliance with DEQ. We've been given a 5 year extension, and volunteer Public Works and other Committees are working to plan and fund an improved sewage system and to develop the land around the lake, etc. Many hours of work have gone into this community challenge. Currently-released effluent upstream, though diluted in the river, is in the water pumped into Vernonia Lake.

I would like to see better Vernonia Lake management and care:

1. Water testing by the City or partnering agency that stocks the lake, for pollutants impacting human fish ingestion with Public Information Signs.

2. Scheduled cleanup of our Vernonia Lake if and when necessary.

3. Enforced day use (fishing) fees for City revenue-kept at \$2 day use. Free for citizens of Vernonia with window parking stickers. Free or half price for non-resident biking and walking, or donations accepted for lake management/habitat fund. (testing, etc.)

4. Citizens (volunteers) involved in managing and protecting Lake:

A. Warning (1 given) and/or tickets (not exorbitant, maybe \$10) (Hopefully, consideration and cooperation is focus)

For:

a. Leaving trash, cigarette butts, cans, fishing lines, etc. that impact health and safety of park users and animal life.

b. Dogs off leash which cause safety issues for wildlife (especially nesting ducks and red-winged blackbirds) and lia-

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Out of My Mind

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What is known is this: When council decided to hire an interim administrator last year, they contacted the League of Oregon Cities (LOC) for a list of available people and also accepted applications from the public. They interviewed only three people, two of them totally unqualified, and hired the third, M.R. "Dick" Kline on July 10, 2006, after a cursory background check. One condition for anyone accepting the interim position was that he would not be considered for the permanent position.

On August 21, 2006, Kline was hired as the regular city administrator, with Mayor Harrison bubbling, "We've had a unique opportunity to watch Mr. Kline for the past two months." Council was unanimous in their sheep-like acceptance. Council agreed fully and asked no questions, not even about salary. There was also no background check of the sort required for every other key position in city government. If there had been, council might have seen an article from August, 2001, in the Ontario Argus-Observer mentioning that Kline was terminated in a one-minute "whirlwind" meeting, by a 7-0 vote.

Does the Vernonia council know why? Should they? Do they care?

The mayor and council should always insist on a thorough background check before hiring for a key position such as city administrator. Questions should be asked and answered *before* hiring.

Equally important, is why council thought it was unnecessary to seek the best candidate available. If that person turned out to be Kline, they would have confirmed their first impression. Mr. Kline, who frequently cites his experience in private business, certainly knows that no well-run business would consider hiring a key person without a thorough check.

Again, this is not questioning Kline, but the mayor and council. They seem to have so little regard for the citizens (taxpayers) of Vernonia that they have forgotten their responsibilities. They are supposed to be the shepherds, not the sheep.

Policy on Letters

The INDEPENDENT will not publish letters that include personal attacks on private citizens. Because of space limitations, preference will be given to brief letters, 300 words or less.

All letters must be signed and include a verifiable address or phone number, and all letters are subject to editing for clarity or length.