

# The INDEPENDENT

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## Opinion

### Want a job at City Hall?

At the August 6 Vernonia City Council meeting council approved the adoption of new job descriptions for the positions that had been known as City Recorder (held by Kate Conley) and Customer Service Manager (held by Joann Glass). The new job titles approved were Administrative & Financial Services Manager/Recorder, and Customer Service/Cash Receipts Clerk. At the time it seemed like council thought these were rollover titles, that Conley would go into the blah, blah, blah/Recorder position and Glass would continue in the customer service role. But, no, according to City Administrator M.R. "Dick" Kline, internal applications for the blah, blah, blah/Recorder job would be reviewed prior to going outside for applicants. When the dust settled, a dedicated, hard-working, long time city employee, Kate Conley, ends up on Administrative Leave (no, we don't know why she's on leave instead of unemployment) while Joann Glass becomes blah, blah, blah/Recorder. The qualifications for the blah, blah, blah/Recorder are minimal and the job description is hard to follow. At the September 17 council meeting (see story page 1), Kline reads a memo, dated September 14, addressed to Glass telling her that as of September 16 she's the new blah, blah, blah/Recorder.

Now, what about the Customer Service/Cash Receipts Clerk position. Well, somehow, Glass and/or Kline knew before September 8 that they would have to advertise for the Customer Service/Cash Receipts Clerk. Yes, that's over a week before the memo to Glass. But, they didn't know in time to advertise here in your local paper. They advertised in The Chronicle, The Hillsboro Argus, and The Courier (twice in each) and the ad said, "City of Vernonia is looking for a Customer Service/Cash Receipts Clerk, 3 yrs exp. Visit our web site at [www.vernonia-or.gov](http://www.vernonia-or.gov). Apply by 9/19/07." The on-line open position information does not indicate a closing date that is one day before this paper came out and only two days after Glass starts her new position on Monday, September 17.

But, even without advertising in this local paper, Glass said she had "lots" of local applications, but when asked how many, "I don't know that," she replied rather testily. It seems they don't want local eyes in city hall.

The whole thing smells fishier than Rock Creek will when the Salmon finally arrive.



### Out of My Mind

by Noni Andersen

#### Keeping us safe from what?!?

If you think "homeland security" is just a tad unbalanced, this will tilt the scales even farther. Now, under the guise of protecting public health from outbreaks of animal-borne diseases, the feds want to keep us safe by tracking and tagging every farm animal...chickens, turkeys, cows, horses, pigs, sheep, llamas, rabbits, etc...in America, from birth to death.

The proposal, called the National Animal Identification System (NAIS), would require owners of such animals to register their premises and personal information in a federal database, to buy microchip devices and attach them to every single one of the animals (each of which would get a 15-digit federal ID number), to log and report every "event" in the life of each animal, to pay fees for the privilege of having their location and animals registered, and to pay fines of up to \$1,000 a day for noncompliance.

You may think NAIS is slightly cumbersome, but the factory farms run by agribusiness conglomerates have huge staffs, computer networks and inventory tracking systems, so it isn't really too bad. Especially since these big operations account for most of the disease outbreaks.

Well, NAIS targets small farms, organic producers, hobbyists, probably even you.

Do you own or board a couple of horses? Do you have a few chickens or llamas or geese? Do your kids raise sheep or ducks or cows or goats

or rabbits or pigs for their 4-H projects? Yes, you're included.

So, why not the already computerized factory farms? Well, there's a neat little loophole.

If an entity owns a vertically integrated, birth-to-death factory system with thousands of animals (think Tyson, Cargill, Foster Farms, etc.), it does not have to tag and track each one. Instead it is given a single lot number to cover the whole flock or herd.

It's no accident that NAIS is so costly – fees, tags, computer equipment, time – to small farmers. It is promoted by the U.S. Dep't. of Agriculture, but it was conceived and written by the National Institute of Animal Agriculture (NIAA), a private consortium composed mostly of corporate agriculture and sellers of surveillance technologies.

The giant operators are happy to see their small competitors saddled with more reasons to go out of business, leaving even more of the market to the big guys. They know the health claims are a sham, because NAIS does not touch the source of most meat-borne diseases, which come from the practices of industrial meat operations.

Also happy are the purveyors of chips and computer tracking systems, who are eager for the profits that would come from the compulsory tagging of millions and millions farm animals.

When the USDA rolled NAIS out in 2005, they wanted mandatory compliance by 2009. Rural America wasn't fooled and NAIS received far more public participation than it wanted. It isn't dead, though, and rural America must stay wary.