

The INDEPENDENT

Published on the first and third Thursdays of each month by The Independent, LLC, 725 Bridge St., Vernonia, OR 97064. Phone/Fax: 503-429-9410. Publisher Clark McGaugh, clark@the-independent.net Editor Rebecca McGaugh, rebecca@the-independent.net Assoc. Editor Noni Andersen, noni@the-independent.net

Opinion

Why all the ordinances?

Another public hearing, another council meeting, another ordinance (spelled "law"). Here's a partial list of our concerns, in question form, on the latest one, ordinance 711;

1) Why doesn't the city hold Town Hall meetings where citizens can come and have an open dialog about topics that affect them, before Public Hearings at which many feel they have no say?

2) Why is it so important to cram these ordinances through that we need back-to-back public hearings by the Planning Commission and the City Council starting at 5:00 p.m. when many people aren't even home from work yet?

3) What's so important about this ordinance that it had to be done now? Don't we all have enough going on without a round of hearings on a 64-page document that we are told only consolidates existing ordinances, except for two changes?

4) About those two changes; why do we need the city to tell us what 'pitch' our roofs have to be and that our front doors have to face the street and have a covered entry or porch that is at least 5 feet by 10 feet?

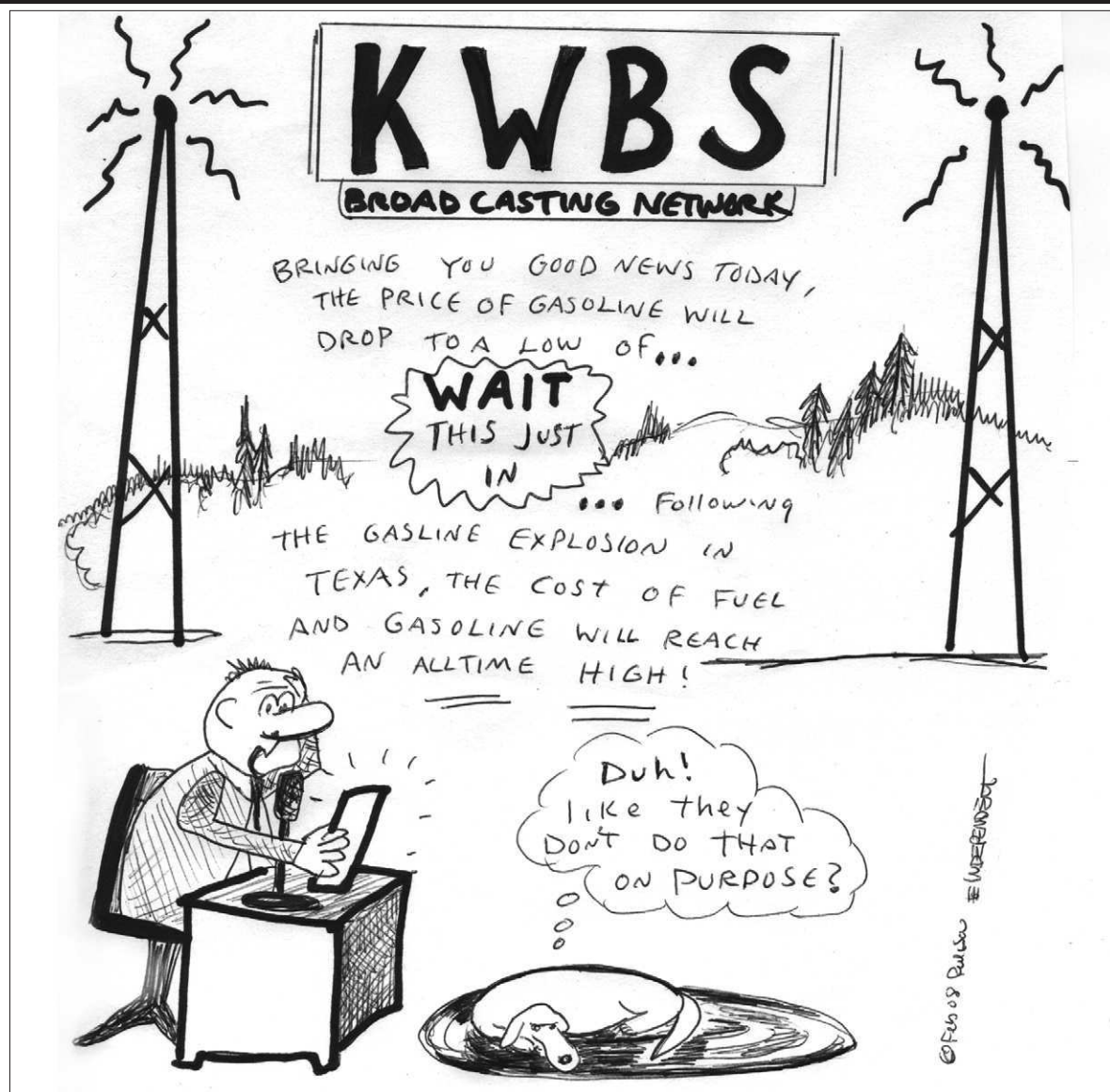
5) If those were the only two changes, why does the handout explaining the changes include changed language that says, "Exterior finishes shall have siding and roofing which in color, material and appearance is comparable to the predominant materials of surrounding dwellings characteristic of the neighborhood"?

6) When citizens are told in the public hearing notice that the ordinance will be available for inspection five days prior to the hearing, why were there last minute changes handed out at the hearing? Maybe they weren't really ready for the hearing?

7) Do we, the citizens of Vernonia, really want these kinds of restrictions on our homes, even for our own good and to protect our property values?

8) Ok, this isn't part of the ordinance, but...Vernonia residents are required to pay permit fees of \$160.00 to replace a furnace, range, dryer, and have the gas test. Everyone else in the county would usually pay \$40.00 for the same furnace, range, dryer and gas test, but those fees have been waived for flood victims in Columbia County (but not in Vernonia). How is this equitable? And, is this why permit fee schedules are not available at City Hall.

9) How does all this help us recover from the flood?



Out of My Mind . . .

by Noni Andersen

Economic development is a goal in both Columbia and Clatsop Counties, which are understandably concerned about improving local economies and creating new jobs. One proposed development that would add jobs to the economy is a new terminal in the lower Columbia River that would be used to bring in liquified natural gas (LNG).

This proposal, which would site the terminal about 20 miles upriver from Astoria at Bradwood, is only one of several proposed LNG terminals on either the Columbia or in Coos Bay. It would provide jobs, more during construction than in actual operations, yet many Oregonians are opposed to LNG terminals. Why?

The Bradwood terminal (backed by NorthernStar Natural Gas Inc. of Houston, Texas) would require storage tanks and processing facilities as much as 13 stories high on an undeveloped stretch of the Columbia River.

The liquified gas would be transported from Russia, Indonesia, the middle east or Australia, in 900-foot tanker ships. These tankers will have priority on the river, regardless of other river traffic, either commercial or recreational. Because of their size, they will need to go as far as 38 miles upriver in order to turn back toward the ocean, and the river will need to be dredged to accommodate them.

Once the super-cooled natural gas reaches Bradwood, it would be pumped into big storage tanks. Then it would be reheated and sent to market as a vapor in high-pressure pipelines.

Because of the federal Energy Policy Act of 2005, the states lost authority to license (or not license) LNG plants. That authority was given to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). Additionally, land needed for the pipelines to market the gas, may be obtained by eminent domain.

The proposed 3-foot Palomar Gas Transmission pipeline would go about 200 miles from Bradwood to Maupin, in Central Oregon, where it would connect to an existing pipeline that runs from Canada to California. A high pressure pipeline of that size will require a right-of-way about 120 feet wide through both public and private property. Land owners along the proposed route are understandably upset.

NorthernStar says the natural gas would be used in Oregon, a statement most Oregonians found laughable. Most say it is as back door approach to marketing the gas in California, which has rejected similar projects.

Oregon's hands are not totally tied, and Governor Ted Kulongoski has written to the feds insisting that review of such projects be stopped until there is a study of Oregon's future energy needs. The state can also require full environmental reviews, including the impact on endangered species, including salmon.

Citizens along the proposed pipeline are concerned about safety, as well. Is Oregon prepared for emergency response if a high-pressure pipeline ruptures and explodes? This doesn't happen often, but when it does, it is serious.

More jobs may lose out to other concerns.