

The INDEPENDENT

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"Voice of the Upper Nehalem River Valley"

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Homecoming preparation



It may not be "home", but temporary FEMA manufactured homes will allow many displaced residents to return to Vernonia while their flood-ravaged homes are being repaired

Temporary homes will help displaced flood victims

Twenty-six temporary FEMA manufactured homes are currently sitting at a staging area near Portland Airport. Up to 21 of these furnished 3-bedroom homes are waiting to come to Vernonia to house, for up to 18 months, people displaced by the Flood of 2007.

The site, behind the Vernonia Public Library, is currently being prepared; while the homes are undergoing formaldehyde testing to be sure none

of the problems experienced with FEMA trailers after Hurricane Katrina will be seen here.

The homes could start arriving as soon as the end of next week and will house those who previously signed up with FEMA. There is even a Hospitality Kit in each home that includes kitchen goods, such as utensils, pots and pans.

Look for some of your neighbors to be coming back to Vernonia with the arrival of the

FEMA temporary homes in the next few weeks.

New phone number for Flood Relief info

Columbia County Flood Relief (CCFR) now has a new, permanent, phone number.

From now on, to contact CCFR, call 503-429-4948. They are still located in the Vernonia Learning Center at 939 Bridge Street.

The next step will be smaller neighborhood meetings over the next three months, starting with small discussion groups on March 10, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the Vernonia Community Church.

In mid-April, the group expects to form several Citizen Action Committees to implement the strategies that will be contained in the Vernonia 2020 plan.

Vernonia in default for failure to submit audit report to state

As of February 28, 2008, the City of Vernonia is in default on their audit extension, according to the Oregon Secretary of State's office.

The INDEPENDENT was told by the city's audit firm, Grove, Mueller & Swank, PC, that the audit had been sent to the city on February 22. The city said we couldn't have it on February 27, so *The INDEPENDENT* submitted a public record request asking for a copy of the audit. That's when it started getting interesting.

When the request was submitted, City Recorder Joann Glass said, "You can't have it."

On Wednesday, February 27, Interim City Administrator Aldie Howard told *The INDEPENDENT*, "You can't have it," and then, "We don't have it." Then Howard said the city's attorney told him that a draft audit was not a public record. After going around on that, Howard stated to Publisher Clark McGaugh that we couldn't have it, "because you brought it on yourself," without offering further elaboration.

On Thursday, February 28, Mayor Sally Harrison was asked about the audit and told us that she was working with Dick Kline on the audit, so Howard may not have known the status. This on the very day the audit was to be provided to the state. She went on to say that the audit received was 'just a draft' and had many errors that the audit firm had

agreed to fix. When contacted by *The INDEPENDENT*, the audit firm said it was not a draft, it was the final audit.

Later the same day, Harrison called back to tell us Kline would send us a PDF of the audit when he "got where he was going" after she reached him by cell phone as he was leaving town. She later called back to say he would not send it via email but it would be included in the council packet that would be delivered Friday night. When it was not in the packet, Harrison was called again and responded that Kline would be bringing the audit to Vernonia on Saturday, March 1, and it would be handed out at the council meeting on Monday, March 3.

The council meeting came and went with no audit and no mention of the audit or the default status, verbally or on the agenda. Tuesday, March 4, Harrison said that, "Dick had to go to Nyssa because his father-in-law is ill, but that he'll return Thursday and we'll all get the audit then."

The audit firm provided 20 copies of the audit, which apparently were picked up at their firm in Salem by Kline, and all 20 copies are in his possession, according to Harrison.

The audit was due at the Secretary of State's office on December 31, 2007, but the

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Help with SOLV river cleanup on Saturday

Join the SOLV Cleanup in Vernonia on Saturday, March 8, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. to clean-up flood debris along area streams. Meet at the Vernonia High School parking lot at 9:00 a.m.

Join the
25th Annual
St. Patrick's Day
Parade
March 17 5:15 p.m.
State Ave. & Bridge St.
No entrance fees