

## 20 Years Ago This Month

The December 29, 1988, issue of *The Independent* included the following editorial piece on page 2:

The City of Vernonia has had serious financial difficulties for several years. The situation isn't going to get better either, without considerable effort on the part of the new city council.

For many years, the city stagnated. City government seemed to ignore problems in-

stead of actively seeking solutions. As a result of this head-in-the-sand form of government, complainants sought solutions through legal action, a process that has been very costly to the taxpayer.

The city has paid \$140,000 in two settlements in the last few years. Approximately \$115,000 in two additional settlements is at various stages of appeal. In addition to the settle-

ment figures, the city continues to pay legal fees in connection with the law suits.

Since at least three of the four law suits could have been settled before reaching litigation, the failure of city government to address the problems resulted in a severe drain on the budget.

A workshop called by Councilor Mario Leonetti this month was a move in the right direc-

tion. He brought together local builders, the building inspector and the building official to publicly discuss a permit and inspection process that has been frustrating to nearly everyone involved. When the council convenes in January, it will have the information it needs to make adjustments in the system. They may not be able to satisfy everyone, but they won't be ignoring the problem.

Open meetings and public discussions should be a regular part of the city's policy for handling problems.

Beside conflict solution, there are other problems that must be dealt with in 1989.

The sewer system must be replaced or repaired, and the overflow of raw or partially treated sewage into the Nehalem River must be sopped.

**Please see page 21**

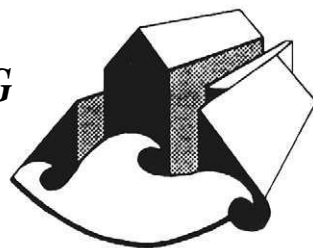
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