

Letters

From page 3

of our citizens. I have worked closely for many years with several police departments, and my observation is that we have a very fine department for a smaller community. They have my support, and I encourage our citizens to also support them. They often go beyond the call of duty to provide a good service to this community. Since we are not perfect, when mistakes happen, we will admit it, correct it, and go on serving you.

I hope this helps you to understand what really has taken place to cause such a discussion among us.

Bob Young
City Administrator
City of Vernonia

Editor's Note: Mr. Graf is 18 years

old, not 19. Witnesses at the scene of Mr. Graf's arrest on March 20 have indicated that the shotgun was not found by the police until after the taser episode. Neither the Juvenile Dept. nor the Columbia County court system have any record of Mr. Graf being charged or convicted of assault, disorderly conduct or any drug charges. We could find no record of him being arrested or found guilty of any of these charges. There is an open case against him for assaulting a public safety officer on March 20.

Free speech is for all, including dissenters

To the Editor:

At the city council meeting last night (July 6), Mike Kay made a speech and a very good one at that. Kudos to Mike! He even made me feel bad. However, there are a cou-

ple of things that I must clarify. First of all, I'm not bashing them for the wonderful job they did during the flood or at any other time. The job they did and currently do is truly, absolutely wonderful. Second, Mike has seemed to miss my point in what seems to be an avoidance of an explanation. The issue is about abusive big city police tactics, not good guy policing in the community.

I thought about Mike's speech. The question that comes to my mind is: Should the good things these guys have done in the past and also in the present overshadow the bad? If this is so, then it should work both ways. There are a lot of people, who on occasion, do something stupid but are basically good people who have done good things. However,

the good things they have done rarely overshadow the bad. Do Vernonians really feel that the fact these guys wear a uniform and carry a badge exempts them from any wrongdoing?

It is true that they have been up here at our place a few times, but Mike failed to point out that it was not I who called them and it was not me they were called to inquire about. As a matter of fact, the 20 years that I've lived in this community, I have never called for police assistance. I generally handle my own affairs. Mike also pointed out that in one instance they had to make a report because the teen in question was involved in an altercation. The truth of the matter is, the teen in question was literally attacked and beat up by two other teens (who were actually adults). This was typical teenage stuff that occurs practically everywhere. This was an unprovoked assault and he sustained substantial injury. He didn't want to report this to the police. I explained to him that this is how we do things in a civilized society and finally convinced him to make a report. I guess you might say I was indirectly responsible for calling a cop; but beating someone up is a serious matter.

Now the question that Mike fails to answer is: How does a teenager who has no training, and who was recently assaulted by two teenagers, all of a sudden develop super-human strength and fighting ability to outmaneuver three large men, who each weigh more than 225 lbs., and who are trained in martial arts? Also, it is alleged that the teen was severely intoxicated. Of course, this is according to the police. In my experience, I have never run into a severely intoxicated person who couldn't be outmaneuvered. It just doesn't make sense!

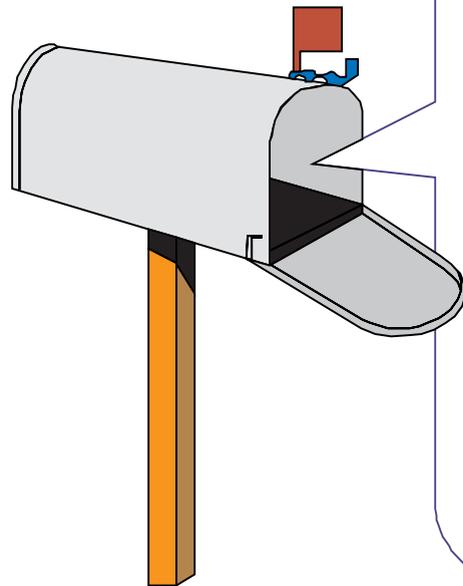
Someone asked why Mike would want a part time job as police chief when he already has a full time job (of course, last night Mike denied ever wanting this job). Simple explanation...the city council created the part time chief's position. This means the city council can make this position full time whenever they so desire. So, if Mike did decide he wanted to

be chief all they would have to do is change it back. I personally don't care one way or the other who the police chief is, but I certainly wouldn't want a chief who feels brutality is a standard police practice. Selection of a chief is a decision that could impact the whole community. The city council should present these matters to the community before they approve them. The community has a right to comment on matters of this nature before they're enacted. All labor agreements, potential hiring of police officers or chiefs, city administrators, hiring of law firms, and all of the particulars associated with these should be made public beforehand.

A word for the city council: It seems that Randy has never heard of "freedom of the press." It appears that he and the other council members have accused *The Independent* of catering to a few individuals who have some sort of grudge against the VPD. The city council has accused *The Independent* of printing a series of articles containing non-truths about the city council and VPD. The articles recently printed in *The Independent* are not, and I say it again "ARE NOT" the opinion(s) of *The Independent* or its publishers; these articles are strictly my opinion and the opinions of others who feel the same way. Also, even though they do possess this power it isn't necessarily the responsibility or job of the editor to screen or determine what "Letters to the Editor" will be printed. This space in *The Independent* is graciously provided for public use. Nothing derogatory has even been printed so I'm not sure what Kevin Hudson meant by "crossed the line".

Isn't our First Amendment Right wonderful? Our founding fathers gave us this gift to voice our grievances and challenge the government through freedom of the press. Without *The Independent*, and other newspapers like *The Independent*, this wouldn't be possible. I am very grateful to *The Independent*. A publication that believes in freedom of the press and our right to voice our opinions and concerns is an exceptionally valuable asset to the communi-

Please see page 20



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