

Mayor, councilor question choice of flood demolition contractor

The Vernonia City Council met on April 19 and May 3, with both meetings lasting until 10:00 p.m. or later.

The first seven flood buyout properties have been identified and approved by council. Council unanimously adopted Resolution 07-10 at their April 19 meeting, which allows for the buyouts and accepts those properties to then be owned by the city with deed restrictions that require them to remain as open space (no building on them) in perpetuity. As part of the process, council also authorized the purchase and sales agreements for each parcel, and approved the use of CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) and FEMA money for parts of the funding. The next step is the choice of a contractor for the demolition.

At the May 3 meeting, awarding a contract for demolition of the flood buy-out proper-

ties was the largest topic, and council was unwilling to make the decision.

Based on criteria council had approved, the Unmet Needs Committee requested bids, then decided on a contractor. Bud Dow, a local contractor who was not chosen, came to the council meeting and questioned the decision. Others spoke in favor of using Dow, also. Both Mayor Sally Harrison and Councilor Kevin Hudson said, essentially, they'd like that too.

Discussion included the fact that the original criteria did not include a preference for local contractors or labor, and that use of any criteria not originally stated would require the process to start over, causing a project delay of three to six more months. Not wanting to delay the project, but wanting to see if there was any other way to review the decision,

council decided to hold a special meeting on May 10, at 7:00 p.m. at City Hall with the Unmet Needs selection group, and the top contractors, to see if additional review and more information will affect the contractor selection.

The waste water treatment project was discussed at both meetings, especially why the \$2-3 million project is now estimated to cost over \$10 million. Public Works Director Bob Ruhl explained that during the conceptual planning phase (just completed) the costs used for a comparison of different types of treatments is not a viable determinant of actual construction costs. Actual construction costs come into play only during the design phase, after the type of system has been decided upon.

This lack of true cost data was not well understood, leading to the incorrect belief that

the project could be done for \$2-3 million. Council clearly stated that a \$10 million price tag is too much for this community to bear and is seeking alternatives.

City Attorney Jeff Bennett pointed out that doing nothing is not a viable alternative because DEQ might then opt to place a moratorium on any further sewer hookups, thus stopping new housing. Ruhl reminded council that Vernonia has been out of compliance with wastewater discharge into the river since 1992 because the current lagoon storage capacity is not sufficient to keep the city from discharging into the river during times when it is not allowed.

When discussion wound down, council consensus was to follow the recommendation of the Public Works Committee and have Ruhl seek assistance from DEQ to review the draft

conceptual design plan, re-evaluate Vernonia's wastewater status and report back at the next Public Works meeting.

At the April 19 meeting, council was set to vote on acceptance of the 2010 Strategic Plan that included the Economic Development Action Plan. This plan was the result of meetings in March and April. At the conclusion of those meetings, community and city staff members agreed that the plan developed by paid consultant Paul Koch met the needs of the city.

There was surprise in the room when Mayor Harrison, who had participated in the meetings leading up to the plan, said, "I don't like it, it just lists nothing concrete." She went on to say she prefers the one written in 1997 and never adopted. Councilor Hudson added, "At a fundamental level,

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Community Calendar

VERNONIA			MIST-BIRKENFELD		
Alcoholics Anonymous	Mondays	6:30 p.m., 410 North Street	M-BRFPD Board Business Mtg.	2nd Tuesday	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
Alcoholics Anonymous	Thursdays (Big Book Study)	7:00 p.m., 410 North Street	M-BRFPD Board Workshop	4th Tuesday	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
American Legion Post #119	2nd Thursday	7:00 p.m., 627 Adams Avenue	M-B Ambulance Drill	1st & 2nd Thursdays	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
Booster Club	2nd Wednesday	7:00 p.m., VHS Library	M-B Fire Drill	1st & 2nd Wednesdays	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
Boy Scout Troop 201	Tuesdays	7:00 p.m., Scout Cabin	M-B Helping Circle	2nd Monday	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
Boy Scout Troop 860	Wednesdays	7:00 p.m., LDS Church	M-B SAR Drill	3rd Wednesday	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
Cemetery Beautification Comm.	2nd Thursday	6:30 p.m., City Hall	M-B Volunteer Assoc.	1st Tuesday	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
CERT	4th Wednesday	For Info Call 503-429-3018	Natal Grange	2nd Wednesday	7:30 p.m., Natal Grange Hall
Chamber of Commerce	2nd Wednesday	For Info Call 503-429-6081	T.O.P.S.	Mondays	9:00 a.m., Main Fire Station
Community Coalition	2nd Monday	12:30 p.m. School District Ofc.	Upr Nehalem Watershed Council	For date call 429-0869	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
Cub Scout Pack 201	Scout Cabin	For Info Call 503-429-4250			
Friends of the Library	1st Tuesday	7:00 p.m., Vernonia Library			
Girl Scouts, Neighborhood 4-2		For Info Call 503-819-0143			
Hands On Art Committee	1st & 3rd Thursdays	4:00 p.m., City Hall	BANKS		
Izaak Walton League	3rd Thursday	For location call 503-429-7193	Alcoholics Anonymous	Friday	7:30 p.m., Methodist Church
Lions Club	1st & 3rd Tuesdays	6:30 p.m., Buckhorn Restaurant	Alcoholics Anonymous	Wednesday	7:30 p.m., Methodist Church
Municipal Airport Committee	4th Thursday	7:00 p.m., City Hall	American Legion Post #90	2nd Tuesday	7:30 p.m., Main Street Post
Pioneer Museum		For Info Call 503-429-3713	Banks City Council	2nd Tuesday	7:30 p.m., City Hall
Public Works Committee	4th Tuesday	7:00 p.m., City Hall	Banks Fire District #13	2nd Wednesday	7:00 p.m., Station 13
Vernonia Cares Directors		For Info call 503-429-1414	Banks Library Commission	3rd Tuesday	7:00 p.m., City Library
Vernonia City Council	1st & 3rd Mondays	7:00 p.m., City Hall	Banks Planning Commission	Last Tuesday	7:00 p.m., City Hall
Vernonia Community PTA	2nd Wednesday	7:00 p.m., WGS Library	Banks School Board	2nd Monday	7:30 p.m., Jr. High Library
Vernonia Garden Club	2nd Tuesday	1:30 p.m., Vernonia Library	Banks Youth Group	Sunday, Wednesday	7:00 p.m., UMC Youth Bldg.
Vernonia Grange	3rd Monday	7:00 p.m., Grange Hall	Chamber of Commerce	1st Thursday	12:30 p.m., Fire District Office
Vernonia Health Center	2nd Monday	6:00 p.m., 510 Bridge St.	CPO 14	3rd Monday	7:00 p.m., City Library
Vernonia Learning Center	1st Wednesday	6:00 p.m., VLC	Everybody's Hometown Band	Tuesdays	7:00 p.m., BHS Music Room
Vernonia Parks Committee	3rd Wednesday	6:30 p.m., City Hall	Friends of the Library	2nd Tuesday	7:00 p.m., City Library
Vernonia Planning Comm.	1st & 3rd Thursdays	7:00 p.m., City Hall	Lions Club	1st & 3rd Mondays	7:00 p.m., Brown Derby
Vernonia Pride	2nd Thursday	1:00 p.m., City Hall	Sunset Park Assoc.	3rd Wednesday	8:00 p.m., Gun Club
Vernonia Ridge Riders	Last Thursday	7:00 p.m., Senior Center	T.O.P.S.	Wednesday	7:00 p.m., Administration Bldg.
Vernonia RFPD Board	2nd Tuesday	6:00 p.m., Fire Station			
Vernonia School Board	2nd Thursday	6:00 p.m., District Office	COLUMBIA COUNTY (All meet in St. Helens unless otherwise noted.)		
Vernonia Sr. Center Board	2nd Friday	10:00 a.m., Senior Center	Board of Commissioners	Wednesday	10:00 a.m., Courthouse
Vernonia Transfer Station	2nd & 4th Saturdays, 8 a.m.-2 p.m.	Behind VHS	Citizens for Senior Justice	2nd Tuesday	7:00 p.m., Sunset Park Church
Vern. Volunteer Ambulance Assoc.	1st, 3rd & 4th Tuesday	7:00 p.m., Fire Station	Columbia Comm Mental Health	1st Tuesday	5:30 p.m., 58646 McNulty Way
Vernonia Volunteer Firefighters	2nd Monday	7:00 p.m., Fire Station	Columbia Soil & Water District	3rd Wednesday	7:30 p.m., NRCS, 2514 Sykes
WOEC Directors	3rd Tuesday	7:00 p.m., WOEC	County Fair Board	2nd Monday	6:00 p.m., Fairgrounds 4-H Bldg.
			County Parks Commission	3rd Tuesday	Times vary, 1054 Oregon St.
			Mental Health Advisory Comm.	Quarterly	For Info call 503-397-7211
			Comm. on Children & Families	3rd Thursday	5:30 p.m. OSU Ext., 505 N. Hwy. 30
			Local Alcohol & Drug Plann. Comm.	Quarterly	For Info call 503-397-7211