

Haack's failure to "communicate" cited as reason for termination

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Burch then concluded, "Scott Laird sent this around (holding up a printed email) before I saw this. Whatever DPSST decides is fine. They made a decision, was Mike Kay allowed to respond?" (See page 1 article on DPSST.)

Uncharacteristically, Councilor Kevin Hudson voted without asking any questions or having any comments, except to say the contract has a two-week severance clause. Hudson, Burch and Nicks voted to terminate Haack's contract, while Mitchell and Councilor Randy Parrow voted nay.

Burch then made a motion to recess so Haack could be escorted from the chambers. Mitchell and the city attorney reminded her that Haack is still Interim City Administrator for two more weeks.

Although Parrow did not say anything during the discussion, he later made a statement, "I want these three people who are short timers in Vernonia to

know that Vernonia finally had our chance – the eyes of state agencies have been turned to us through Bill Haack. What the three of you have done...it really boils down to these pieces of paper (the DPSST letters), we have one who is very close and should not have voted on this, and another who has a conflict of interest. DPSST certifies police in Oregon and as you'd know if you read the investigation, this was not started by Bill so why you are blaming Bill I have no idea whatsoever." (*Editor's note: The investigation was started due to information from the Vernonia Justice Court and The Independent.*)

After Parrow's comments, Burch added that, "I have asked for information numerous times on this subject (apparently referring to the DPSST investigation of Kay)...This is a man's life, his career. If it was so serious I would have had information." Parrow responded, "How long have those documents been available at City

Hall"? The reply was two months.

Earlier, Burch, co-owner of Vernonia Hardware across the street from City Hall, had said she works 10-12 hours a day and doesn't have time to go to city hall to look at records. Apparently upset, she said she went to city hall at 5:00 p.m. to see the records and the doors were locked.

Many members of the audience wanted to chime in at some point, but Mitchell appropriately limited the discussion to council. Throughout the proceedings it was obvious that most of the standing-room-only audience did not approve of the majority decision.

Haack continued the meeting, giving background to council on other agenda items, without commenting on his termination. When asked for his reaction the next day, Haack responded, "I'm a professional in this setting. I'm under contract and work at the will of the city. A majority of council has determined I no longer meet their needs and that is cause for them to cancel the contract. My

only disappointment is that I wish I had the opportunity to finish the work that has been started."

The Independent suggested to Burch on Tuesday that it appeared, from the way the firing was handled, that she, Hudson and Nicks had deliberated to a decision outside of a council meeting, Burch replied, "That never happened," and did not elaborate.

The council approved an agenda item allowing Haack to sign an exchange agreement with the Oregon Park and Recreation Department that turns the land referred to as the Rose Avenue Project (alongside the new WOEC building) over to the city in exchange for an agreement that keeps in place the trail running past Anderson Park and on to the Lake. This agreement opens the Rose Avenue Project property to the possibility of relocating the Senior Center, Vernonia Cares Food Bank, and the Vernonia Health Clinic where future flood events won't threaten these community services.

In other business, the coun-

cil:

- Approved the appointment of Roger Lindsley to the Public Works Committee,

- approved an amendment to the Flood Mitigation Demolition Contract that eliminates the need for each individual address to be approved by a separate contract,

- authorized Haack to have the City Engineer work on portions of the Wastewater Facility Plan,

- authorized Haack to hire one or more temporary employees for work in the parks,

- heard there will be a work session on May 16, at 6:00 p.m. on a potential business park at the airport,

- was reminded of a joint work session with the Planning Commission on May 5 to review documents updating the draft transportation system plan.

The next regular council meeting will start at 7:00 p.m. on May 16 (after the airport business park work session at 6:00 p.m.) at City Hall.

Lack of communication by whom?

Councilors Willow Burch and Marilyn Nicks both stated at the May 2 council meeting that Interim City Administrator Bill Haack has not given them information, specifically, that he doesn't communicate what he's working on. At the January 18, 2011, meeting Haack handed out a 4-page document entitled Work In Progress (excerpts below). Just after this he sent all council a memo of times he would be available during the week before meetings to discuss agenda items or other items.

Works in Progress
as of Jan. 18:

12 items under City Council including; council trainings and workshops, budget training, and working on hiring a regular city administrator.

7 items under City Committees including; creating committee training opportunities, and developing standards for ordinances and reports to council.

10 items under Interim City Administrator, including; setting a goal setting retreat, acting as liaison on five city projects (moving the schools, moving West Oregon Electric Coop.,

working with ODOT on road issues, Rose Ave. Project and Wastewater treatment facility upgrade)

10 items on staff issues, such as job descriptions and employee handbooks (which don't exist in a updated form).

17 items working with the city attorney on leases, exchange agreement for the Rose Ave. Project land, and demolition projects.

8 items with police, such as evaluating Interim Police Chief Mike Conner, work introduced by previous chief Frank Grace, staffing and budget issues.

Then 1-1/2 pages having to do with items currently needed from committees and commissions or ongoing projects related to same.

Then a full page of specific issues relating to four large projects; School Road Improvements, Rose Avenue Project, Wastewater Facility Update Plan and Brownfield Assessment Plans.

Since January 18, determining how to handle the green space created by home demolitions has been added to the project lists.

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