

Recall efforts underway, Burch and Nicks respond in interview

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out using the funds verifications process. (Editor's Note: Ordinance 854 on city administrator's duties and responsibilities gives the interim city administrator the authority to initiate investigations and run all city business. Only hiring and firing of personnel is excluded.)

2. What is the considerable money Haack cost the city?

Burch – \$75,000 for attorney fees under the Vernonia Police Department budget line items for professional fees.

3. What facts did Sharon Bernal not verify?

Burch – She said Mike Kay and I are friends and I made the motion to cancel Bill Haack's contract because it was about a friend. I'm friendly towards all police, fire, city personnel, etc. but that doesn't mean they are my personal friends.

4. How do you know Bernal called the press in?

Burch – I guess I don't know, but she was the petitioner on the recall and organized the rally they (the press) showed up at and is the "Big Mouth".

5. Where did you get the 'tort claim filed' information?

Burch – I was led to believe that by the city attorneys and Jim Johnson. (Editor's Note: Jim Johnson denies saying a tort claim had been filed. As of July 18, no tort claims have been filed against the city.)

6. Who has threatened you with a Federal lawsuit?

Burch – The city attorneys and Jim Johnson fully expect it to go to the federal level.

7. Can you explain what you mean by dishonesty?

Burch – When I repeatedly requested an executive session, Haack said, "No, there is nothing to discuss," but in reality there was a lot of sensitive information that was needed to make informed decisions. (Editor's Note: Though Haack declined to hold an executive session in January, he offered to meet individually with new councilors to bring them up to speed on employee issues.)

8. What are you trying to protect the citizens of Vernonia from?

Burch – Further money being spent on this whole debacle?

9. What's the debacle?

Burch – More investigations

or possible litigation.

10. How are you protecting them?

Burch – By participating in the hiring of a qualified city administrator for Vernonia.

11. How can you say you insist on transparency when you have also said you need to have private meeting outside council, like during the budget process?

Burch – Transparency is not making decisions in secret meetings. So-called "coffee house meetings" are about educating myself on the process and requesting executive sessions, the secret meetings, is to be informed on personnel issues.

Sharon Bernal's response to Burch's justification was, "When she said there has been too much dysfunction, I have not seen much dysfunction 'til she came into office. It would be nice if Willow would explain why at three meetings [when] I directly asked what her issues were with Bill Haack that the public needed to know and she never answered. When I read her statement now, there is still no specific information. I did not call the news crews. All I have done is what our government gave every one of us the ability to do – take the steps to recall a public official when we feel they are not serving the community. We are taking the legal, professional and proper steps to do the recall."

Marilyn Nicks justification letter gave the following reasons for not resigning, "I haven't seen the signatures or their validity. Does eight percent of the population constitute 'the community as a whole'. Reasonable people don't yell, create chaos, disrupt public meetings, and slander public officials. I have seen inappropriate city administrator behavior such as refusing Council directives, withholding documents and vital information from Council, deliberate deception, and putting the city at risk. In good conscience I couldn't just hire the Interim City Administrator, in spite of uninformed public opinion

"The Interim wouldn't commit to the position when asked, therefore I voted for the League of Oregon Cities process. I made many efforts to improve communication. The Interim City Administrator canceled my

appointments and withdrew from mediation I initiated with a neutral source.

"I support the Senior Center, Food Bank, Health Clinic, school project, economic development and livability.

"I don't support out of control spending, unsustainable projects and backroom deals.

"I deplore the hype and hysteria that's brought division and made city business difficult.

"At great personal cost and no personal profit, I made decisions that were intended to promote the best interests of Vernonia as well as protecting its citizens and the integrity of their government.

"Vote NO!"

1. a. What council directive did Haack refuse? b. what documents were withheld? c. What vital information?

Nicks – a. Haack refused when we asked for an executive session to be brought up to speed on an employee issue. b. The Brown/Caldwell summary on the waste water treatment project. c. A couple of things; waste water project and employee issue stuff. (Editor's Note: Though Haack declined to hold an executive session in January, he did offer to meet individually with new councilors to bring them up to speed on employee issues.)

2. What is the public uninformed about, regarding the city administrator hiring?

Nicks – The amount of effort I made to improve communications with Haack. I made appointments with him but it took him three months to sit down with me.

3. What does "Interim wouldn't commit to position when asked" mean?

Nicks – I specifically asked Haack if he was interested in the city administrator job and he would not commit. This was before the League of Oregon Cities was brought in.

4. How many appointments with you did Haack cancel and why?

Nicks – It was several, but I only have documentation of one because not all my requests were done via email.

5. a. Had you entered into a mediation agreement and was a meeting scheduled? b. Had Haack agreed to mediate? c. If so, when did he withdraw?

Nicks – a. and c. At council meeting, Haack was going to contact several mediators and set it up and Bill and I and a citizen were to determine the scope of the mediation. Haack emailed me that Jim Johnson would contact me directly then he withdrew. b. By inference in the above, he agreed to medi-

ate. (Editor's Note: Jim Johnson said he interviewed Haack, City Recorder Joann Glass and all five council members on communications, and prepared a memo sent to council in May on steps to resolve those issues. This was in place of mediation.)

6. What out-of-control spending do you mean when you say you don't support it?

Nicks – \$10 million for a waste water treatment membrane system and increased project manager costs and the level of spending from the sewer fund is not sustainable over the next two years. (Editor's Note: These are not decisions made by Haack, but rather changes that would need to be approved by the council)


7. What back room deals?

Nicks – I want to be sure to keep what's happening with city business in the open and with collaboration of citizens.

Bernal's response to Nicks justification, "I've talked about the citizens not being informed right up to July 12 when the justifications were turned in and there is still no explanation, just open-ended statements. There is a false statement here when Nicks said Haack withdrew from mediation – I went

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