

Unresponsive Council Alert

An OLCV Report on the Environmental Record of the Newport City Council

Over the last few decades the Oregon League of Conservation Voters (OLCV) has worked hard to build our credibility as a non-partisan resource for voters who are concerned with conservation issues. Our goal is to educate voters and help them hold our politicians accountable with our main tool, the OLCV scorecard. In selecting votes that clearly have environmental implications, we hope to provide the public with a reliable tool to help identify important environmental issues and to see how our elected officials are responding to them, or in this case not responding.

Historically, to adequately judge the environmental record of an office holder, a scorecard represents at least five votes. However, in researching the Newport City Council's 2004-2005 record it became apparent that there weren't even five votes that clearly concerned the environment. Never before have we had to deal with the challenge of evaluating a body that does not address environmental issues. To uphold the credibility of the scorecard system and give voters a valid tool we are issuing **an Unresponsive Council Alert**.

This city council has successfully averted taking any real action in regards to the environmental issues proposed before it. OLCV asks you to help hold your local politicians accountable: Please contact your mayor and city council.

Urban Growth Boundary Expansion (UGB) near the Agate Beach Landfill

PASSED 5-0 (Unanimous vote) on March 1, 2004. *Ordinance 1870*

This was a destructive expansion of the Urban Growth Boundary. Ordinance 1870 reclassifies approximately 85 acres of land previously set aside as "timber conservation" and "forest" as industrial (approximately 40 acres) and public (approximately 45 acres) on the Newport Comprehensive Map. This final rezoning of the property as a mix of medium industrial, heavy industrial and public structures is inconsistent with Statewide planning Goal 4 (protected forest lands.) Furthermore, the council's decision exhibits a disregard for the environmental effects of developing on this land without an adequate reason for the development of this specific site.

Iron Mountain Impact Area

PASSED 6-0 (Unanimous Vote) October 18, 2004. *Ordinance 1878*

This vote was another detrimental expansion of the Urban Growth Boundary. It reclassifies approximately 30 acres of land in the Iron Mountain Impact area previously classified as "timber conservation" as an industrial zone. In adopting this ordinance, the council made no consideration for why this land located near Iron Mountain Quarry should no longer be classified as timber conservation.

Renewal of State Parks' Intergovernmental Agreement

PASSED 6-0 (unanimous voice vote) on April 5th, 2004

The council did not renew the Oregon State Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) intergovernmental agreement that gave OPRD a portion of transient room taxes, which are paid to the City by the State. The original agreement expired in 2000 and OPRD has repeatedly tried to get it renewed in order to make improvements to South Beach state park. Instead of addressing the issue, the council returned the proposal staff to prepare a report on OPRD's needs, an action that further stalled improvements to South Beach state park. Almost 2.5 years later, the report has yet to appear in front of the council.

General Flushing of City waterlines proposed by Cascade Water Works

PASSED 6-0 (Unanimous voice vote on May 16, 2005)

The Newport City Council approved the general flushing of the city water lines without considering its environmental impact. In order to prevent the build up of manganese, a harmless mineral that makes the water turn brown, the city approved a potentially hazardous plan. Although a valid aesthetic concern, the manganese was not so large of an issue to demand so large of a response. A general flushing requires the opening of two hydrants at the far end of the system that release an uncontrolled velocity and flow of water intended to dislodge sediment. However, this uncontrolled flow also has the potential to cause breaks, leaks and release other pollutants into the entire system from unintended lines. All of this is in addition to the unquantifiable waste of water. The environment was not one of the concerns raised in the discussion to approve the plan and neither was the overall water quality of the city. The City Council neglected to consider all of the important factors in their decision and thus neglected important alternatives. One alternative would be detailed flushing which allows you to isolate one line and to be present for unexpected breaks or leaks therefore eliminating the risk of exacerbating existing problems and requires much less water.

Nye Beach Water Quality –Public Hearing

November 21st and December 19th, 2005

When concerned citizens spoke to the City Council in Public hearings about the quality of Nye Beach water the council did not respond. On November 21st many issues regarding contamination of Nye beach were brought before the council including a request for better signage in areas with high levels of contamination. The council did nothing. Furthermore, on December 19th, several citizens listed to the council the sources of pollution at Nye Beach including sanitary sewer overflow, the City's wastewater, Georgia Pacific outfall and Nye Creek beach activities. Despite the gravity of the pollution the council did not vote or move to take any action.

Lease of port for Event Center

The Council approved the lease for the controversial Newport Event Center on a parcel of land that has a high potential of future erosion and is in a tsunami and earthquake hazard zone. The development of the event center has been indefinitely postponed due to other disputes over the project, but the fact still remains that the Council made a decision to lease a parcel of land that is not environmentally sound for this development.