



1001 Bridge Street

Vernonia, OR 97064

www.vernonia-or.gov

February 18, 2019

To: Chair Holvey, Members of the House Committee on Rules

From: Josette M. Mitchell, City Administrator

Re: VOTE NO on HB2420

We are writing to state the City of Vernonia's strong opposition to HB 2420. This bill, if passed, would have significant impact on our city's ability to maintain the level of service that a third party building official has provided.

Being a small rural City in the state of Oregon it is difficult to maintain the level of service our citizens require while running on a very small budget. Given our financial constraints it would be an impossibility for the City of Vernonia to hire an employee to cover and function as our third party building official has, we simply do not have the money. The idea of being forced to enter into an IGA or a COG with other small cities in order to serve our citizens, would most definitely limit the service our citizens receive as we would be relying on scheduling as a collective. The City of Vernonia in the past has gone through the County for building inspection services as is described in HB 2420, the program failed miserably and we took control of our building inspection services through a third party building official over 10 years ago. Since that time we have had no issues, supplying our citizens with regular service at a reasonable price.

HB 2420 would prevent us from continuing this successful program. The city would either have to contract with other cities, a county, or a council of government to hire not only a building official, but a building inspector or return the program back to the county. For cities that look to partner with other local governments, HB 2420 would limit the number of partners to three. This requirement means that smaller cities that might not have sufficient work to hire multiple full-time employees across all three jurisdictions and will be required to give up their programs. Small cities that could not find consistent service from the county will be returned to that situation.

The advantage of third party inspection programs is that they provide consistent service levels to the city. In an era where cities are looking to reduce barriers to housing and invest in economic development, slowing down the building process works in direct opposition to these efforts.

We have heard that a major concern is how oversight occurs. These programs have multiple means of insuring their effectiveness and proficiency. Cities directly oversee these contracts, and if a third party provider is not performing, they can terminate the relationship and find another a provider. If the building official or inspector is failing in their duties, they can be challenged to the state. The state also controls their licensing and can, therefore, revoke if they are consistently failing to properly perform their duties. Finally, cities that have local programs are subject to review by the state. Every four years we are subject to review for renewal of our programs, and we are required to provide information to the Building Code Division about our program's finances. If a lack of oversight is the major concern, change the oversight policies, do not take over our programs and force us to use a system that has failed us in the past and most definitely has the potential to fail us again.

The City of Vernonia believes that using third party inspection providers allows us to meet the needs of our community. For these reason, we ask that you do not pass HB 2420.

Respectfully,