

FEMA issues Mount Vernon ultimatum

by John Draper

MOUNT VERNON — The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has extended Mount Vernon's deadline to write a floodplain construction ordinance to June 1, 1982.

FEMA officials had originally told city building official Ron Maynock the city had 30 days to write a strict ordinance or be kicked out of the federal flood insurance program. Word came last Friday, however, that the deadline was altered.

The consequences are still the same however. If Mount Vernon fails to write such a construction ordinance, people here will not be able to get federal flood

insurance, the only flood insurance available.

Without flood insurance people will not be able to get financing from federally insured institutions.

The consequences of writing a strict ordinance and staying in the flood insurance program are also harsh, according to Maynock. At a recent meeting of the Mount Vernon Chamber of Commerce he said a FEMA-type ordinance would substantially increase construction costs.

For example, he pointed out, any FEMA-type ordinance would require all new construction to be elevated above

the 100-year flood level.

Jack Macauley, Mount Vernon realtor who heads a special committee of the Skagit County Board of Realtors with the task of informing the Board of FEMA-related matters, said such a FEMA-type ordinance would increase construction costs so that new houses would be "economically not feasible."

"This is far worse than any threat of flood," he said.

He said he has had a personal experience of a client deciding not to build for fear of costly floodplain building regulations. He said the client had long term plans for his property, wanting to wait on con-

struction until later.

However, he said the client feared that while he was waiting the ordinance would take effect and the price of construction would increase.

Wayne Granacki, Skagit County Board of Realtors president, said he hasn't heard of anybody stopping development plans in fear of an ordinance. On the contrary, he said he felt people are indignant toward FEMA. He said people don't want to be told what to do by the federal government.

Granacki predicted the city would go against FEMA demands and decide not to write an ordinance.