

Feds reject MV flood ordinance

By GALE FIEGE
Staff Writer

MOUNT VERNON — The City of Mount Vernon's recently written flood plain management ordinance has been rejected by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

In a letter sent to Mayor Ruth Gidlund on Monday, the agency basically said the ordinance had been rejected because of what FEMA official Chuck Steele called the exclusion of 10 "minor" requirements.

Of 17 procedural requirements spelled out in federal flood insurance program regulations, the city included "the important ones," Steele said.

"But these were well spelled-out regulations and the city can't skip any of them and expect to get through. We require these of everyone and can't make an exception," he said.

"We're not saying this is a bad ordinance. It's actually very good. They got over the basic hurdle, but didn't go quite far enough," he added.

He said the city would have to amend its ordinance to include the points in order to once again be a part of the federal flood insurance program.

The points are ones that deal with a variety of specific technical requirements having to do with such things as how mobile homes are secured so they won't wash away, water and sewer systems precautions, dredging of landfills and more, Steele said.

City Attorney Larry Moller said

forgotten. The council thought they could receive results from the ordinance without those 10 points," Moller said.

Since some of the points are tied to flood elevations and since FEMA has agreed that data used in determining flood elevations is insufficient, the city is wondering why some of the conditions would have to be included, Moller said.

The city's licensing and ordinance committee will review FEMA's rejection letter and the ordinance before bringing the matter before the council probably on Oct. 27, Moller said.

"We're very willing to keep working with FEMA on this," he said.

An original deadline of June 1 had been set by FEMA for the city to write and adopt a flood plain construction ordinance in order to come into compliance with the new emergency phase of the National Flood Insurance Program.

Usually the ordinance would have to require that any new or substantially improved structure be built above the 100-year flood level as determined by FEMA.

But after a successful appeal by City Engineer John Wiseman of the Army Corps of Engineers' data used in determining the base flood elevations required by FEMA, the city was granted an extension to write the ordinance by Aug. 8.

FEMA is continuing to review the elevations and had instructed the city to use "reasonable historical data" in establishing the base flood elevations.

The city finally adopted an ordinance on Sept. 8 and sent it on to FEMA for response.

Basically, the ordinance the city came up with only encourages protective measures be taken by persons constructing new buildings in the flood hazard areas of the city.

Proponents of construction would have to sign an affidavit in which he acknowledges his construction lies in the flood hazard areas and is aware of FEMA's original flood elevation figures.

As work on the ordinance continues, about 350 flood insurance policies held by property owners in the city will continue to run their term. Until such time as the city amends its flood plain management ordinance with an OK from FEMA, no new policies can be obtained and existing policies could not be renewed if they expire.

"We were aware that all those criteria were not included in the ordinance. It was done through deliberate process by the council and wasn't

10-6-82

000380
SM