

City Endorses County Flood District

Skagit county commissioners last night received approval of Mount Vernon's city council to proceed with formation of a countywide flood control zone district.

Approval of all cities, organizations and farmers is being sought, City Engr. Denny LeGro, chairman of the Skagit County Water Advisory council, told the Mount Vernon officials.

The proposed district, authorized by the last legislature, would enable the county to sponsor flood control projects directly, rather than through smaller, independent districts, LeGro explained. He said it would not be a new, separate governmental agency, since it would be governed and served by the county commissioners and present county employees. Any special tax assessments it might want would have to be put to a vote of the people affected, and the only taxes it could levy directly would be within any presently available

under the present 40-mill limitation.

The new district would not necessarily mean elimination of present diking and drainage districts, LeGro added, in response to a question.

The water advisory council has found that last year's presidential executive order forbidding use of federal loan or grant funds in a flood zone is presently interpreted to mean the ban applies to any part of the Skagit valley that would be affected by a "100-year" flood. This would include all of the lower valley, including the flatland part of Mount Vernon, and much of the valley upriver.

The only protection so far found against a 100-year type of flood is a major storage dam far upriver and its cost has been roughly estimated at 90 million dollars, LeGro reported further. The advisory council favors the proposed improved diking of the river and channel widening from Sedro Woolley to the mouth, which

would give eight-year flood protection, but has taken no stand on the controversial Avon by-pass, which would protect against a 35-year flood.

A new flood control development, possibility of having the Puget Sound Power & Light Co. reserve from 11 to 19 feet of its Upper Baker dam storage for flood control use, has been suggested and is now being studied, LeGro divulged. The company would be compensated for its loss of water for meeting peak power loads by exchange of Bonneville power. This storage could step up flood protection by as much as 12 cycle years, or to 20 if combined with the lower river dike-channel program.

Mayor Pro Tem James P. Kean presided over much of the meeting, after Mayor Herman Hanson left to attend another gathering.