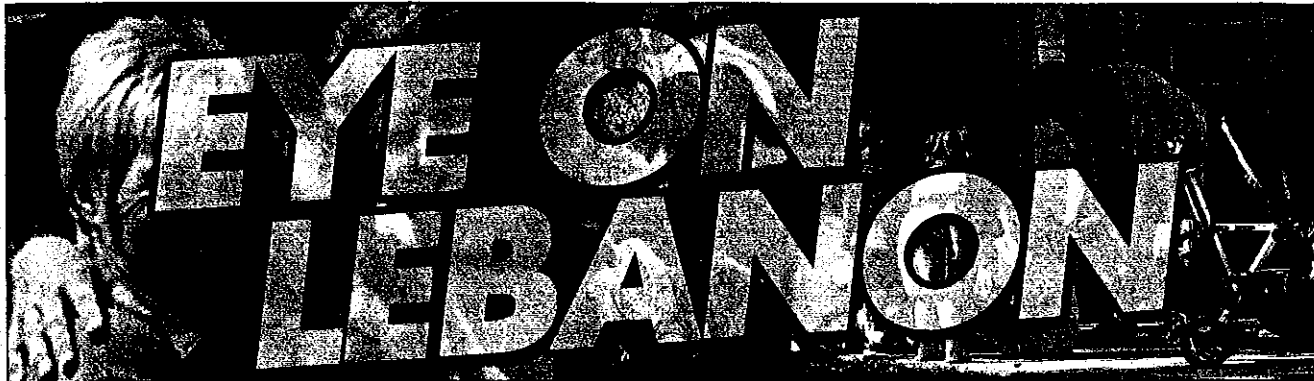


THE Lebanon Reporter

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2009

WWW.REPORTER.NET

50¢



In cities and towns, it's good to have a plan

This column is one in an ongoing series of columns written by community leaders at the request of the Community Vision Committee, with the goal of providing a deeper knowledge of the many aspects of the city of Lebanon.

If the staff from the Planning and Zoning Administration Department for the city of Lebanon had to wear hats defining our various job responsibilities, the hats would say: Building Inspector, Flood Plain Administrator, City Code Enforcement Officer, and Planning and Zoning Administrator. The office is staffed by four full-time people and one part-time inspector, and we get to work on issues that range from routine to highly controversial, depending on your viewpoint.

Take the job of building inspector, for example. The work itself is fairly straightforward, but the devil is in the details as we've learned when we started permitting roofing and fences. Hillman Bray is the primary inspector, but Derek Warren and I share in the responsibilities. We are responsible for permitting and demanding safe construction methods in the corporate city limits, which include commercial buildings (like those out in



CHARLIE CAMPBELL

Guest column

Lebanon Industrial Park), room additions, houses, fences, electric repair or replacement, heating and air new installation or replacement, plumbing, etc.

There are three certified inspectors in our office. We are trained by attending seminars and lectures that are usually sponsored by IABO (Indiana Association of Building Officials).

We recently started permitting roofing and fences, primarily to have a record of the responsible contractor on file. We have experienced reroofing projects where debris left on the ground scatters into streets and neighboring yards. By maintaining contact information about contractors, we hope to pre-

vent problems like this. Fences were not a permitted use until recently, but we decided they should be after hearing/fielding years of complaints about fence construction, maintenance, property line disputes and neighbor feuds. Someone in our office once commented that "fences create bad neighbors." I believe the permitting process will help alleviate some of the problems of the past, giving neighbors clear-cut rules for fence installation. Fences now can be no closer than three feet from the property line. That allows fence owners to repair, mow and paint without trespassing on the neighbor.

Our department also serves as the flood plain administrator. We are the official "holder of the flood maps" for the city. Kristi Spencer, who manages the office, is the primary contact for this information. We have no influence over the flood plain and can make no decisions about building in the flood zones unless the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) approves. We can only relay information we have about the flood maps to people who ask. In the summer of 2008 we were invited to a meeting with represen-

tatives from the IDNR. We were told at that time there was a new flood map proposed for the city and we were given a copy for review. After the map is officially adopted by IDNR, the city must do the same. The proposed map reduces the flood plain substantially. This has been an ongoing process that began in 2005 as a statewide effort to update the flood plain maps. We are still waiting for official approval to begin the local adoption process.

The Lebanon City Code lays out the framework for the responsibilities and authority for the city government. Code enforcement is the primary responsibility of Derek Warren. Our city code is packed full of juicy tidbits of do's and don'ts. It gives specific direction and responsibilities to all departments, including the Building Inspector/Planning Department. Any responsibilities not specifically given to one of the other city departments officially fall to the Building Inspector/Planning Department.

For example, did you know that in Lebanon you cannot throw an object across the street, keep bees, spit on the sidewalk or keep hogs in a sty? The code is necessary for

the function of government but needs to be updated from time to time as it should apply to current-day standards.

Planning and zoning administration is the primary function of the office in regards to development. Alex Koenig, our city planner, is the technical advisor for most planning issues. The planning department was reformed with the adoption of the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) of 2008. The UDO specified procedure and the use of land; it even went as far as to specify certain materials that influence the overall look of a building. Two good examples of the ordinance "at work" are the newly built Goodwill Store and Home National Bank. Notice the facades, landscaping, mechanical screening, and signage. There is much more to the ordinance than the things I just mentioned, but these are a few things that really make for a more attractive community.

If you have planning or zoning questions, you can contact our department at 482-8845 or e-mail cityplanning@cityoflebanon.org.

Charlie Campbell has been Lebanon's planning and zoning director since January 2008.