

Beginning the Skills Park

First official Work Day at the site is scheduled for Saturday June 30th at 9am. If interested in taking part and helping build Vernonia's newest attraction, please contact Donna Webb at the Chamber of Commerce 429-6081

Skills Park Work Day Schedule

Thursday 6/14 6pm
 Thursday 6/28 6pm
 Saturday 6/30 9am**
 Thursday 7/12 6pm
 Saturday 7/14 9am
 Thursday 7/26 6pm
 Saturday 7/28 9am

**Official groundbreaking

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FAQ's cont.

understood that it would be grant funded. It is an unfortunate error to consider grant money to be "free". Obtaining a grant is only the tip of the iceberg. Managing the grant and delivering on the promised outcomes is where the real work lies. As outlined above, these grants were for construction, but not for operations. It appears to have been assumed that the operation of the Learning Center would easily follow once it was built. As a result, the Learning Center never had a realistic operating plan and budget. The 2008 City Budget calls for \$22,500 in support from the city. Under other circumstances such spending would not seem so dire. For example, the city budget calls for \$78,000 in support of the Library.

The Learning Center and city staff are working to create a feasible operating plan and matching self-sufficient budget. This is a daunting task. There are no identical learning centers elsewhere to copy. One thing is certain, self-sufficiency will involve maximizing the use of the facility by as many Vernonians as possible. To meet this goal, the VCLC and the city staff have drawn the community into the process. The VCLC board and staff believe that full-scale use of the facility is necessary in making the VCLC self-sufficient.

Finally, mistakes have been made. When public money is being spent, an issue can turn hot and divisive, quickly. The lack of timely public discussion of the inter fund loans and cost overruns related to the Learning Center have fueled this controversy.

At the end of the day, the facts are simple. The city is obliged to operate the center for four more years, at-or-near current service levels. The alternative is to repay \$650,000 of state money. Finding the most self-sufficient level of services at the VCLC is essential. Income from user fees, operating grants and tuition must be balanced against the cost of delivering those services to turn a profit, or at least minimize any drain on city resources.

Finally, change creates apprehension, as results aren't often immediately noticeable. Historically, change is controversial in any community. One of the goals and hopes of the Community Learning Center is to work with and include as many people from the community as possible.

The VCLC received a \$35,000 Ford Family Foundation grant for improvements to the building including acoustic paneling, blinds, new media equipment, furniture and more! A big thanks to The Ford Family Foundation for your continued financial support to the community of Vernonia. This grant will contribute to a higher quality learning environment for those who depend on the learning atmosphere of the center for their self-development. These upgrades will be in place by Fall term, 2007.

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