

# Bridges Planning Group Helps Community Consider Vernonia in 2020

By Scott Laird

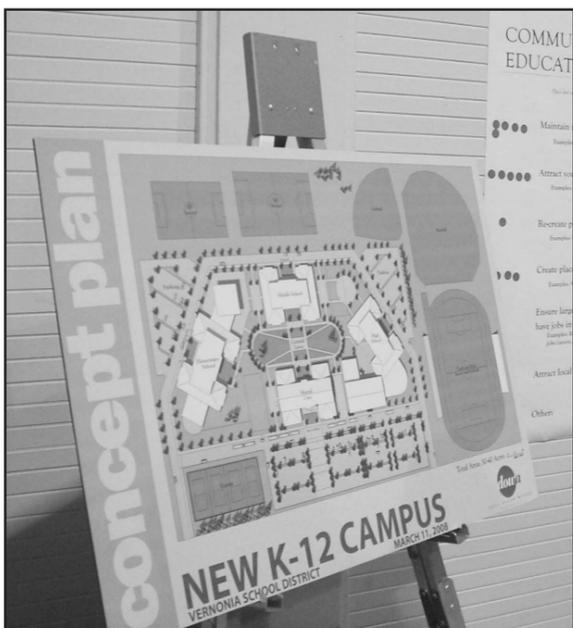
What do we want Vernonia to be like in the Year 2020? What are our priorities for Vernonia's flood recovery? What should we do about our schools? These are some of the questions the Bridges Planning Group is asking Vernonia residents this spring as they facilitate a series of group discussions called "Vernonia 2020 Vision."

The Bridges Planning Group consists of nine graduate students from Portland State University from the Master's of Urban and Regional Planning Program who have formed a partnership with the City of Vernonia in order to gather citizen input and discuss citizen hopes for the future of our community. The group has been working with city staff, especially Vernonia Community Learning Center Director Jessica Jones and Interim City Administrator Aldie Howard, to develop the goals and format of the program and then implement the community discussions. "This process is truly reflective of the administration's dedication to better serve the public by involving the public," said Jones. "I am very pleased that this step was taken because it shows a willingness on the City's part to listen to the community."

The Bridges Group is expecting to help identify community priorities and deliver a plan that will help Vernonia make this vision a reality. "When we arrived the community had already started recovery," said George Zaninovich of the Bridges Group. "We wanted to look out into the future but not too far. That's where the 2020 comes from. It's been twelve years since the last flood here. 2020 is twelve years from now."

"We are interested in hearing what people want their community to be," said Ariana Tipper, another member of the group, who has worked with communities recovering from Hurricane Katrina. "We want to help identify broad ideas and look at constraints that will narrow priorities and eventually create solutions."

Through March there have been four total meetings between the Bridges Group and Vernonia. The first was held in February and included a small number of community



stakeholders who were identified and invited because of their immediate potential to offer input to the process. Next was a community open house, potluck and "resource fair" on March 3 which was open to the entire community and was intended to introduce the process and answer questions. Two more meetings were scheduled and took place on March 10 and 20. These meetings focused on dividing the community into smaller groups and having facilitator guided small group discussions. The March 10 meeting focused on what residents like about Vernonia currently and what they wanted to see the community as a whole look like in twelve years.

The March 20 meeting included a presentation by members of the school district staff and the school board about the possible relocation of the school campus. The rest of the evening was dedicated to group discussions about



what is good about the present schools and what the community wants and values in the possible location of new schools.

"We have been happy to help facilitate getting the city and schools working together in this type of public discussion about the future of the community," said Zaninovich.

There was also time at the March 20 meeting for community members to identify what they see as community priorities for recovery. The list of priorities generated from the meeting included: creating places for teens, constructing indoor activity facilities like a theater or bowling alley, and creating outdoor facilities like walking trails and a skate park.

"We have been extremely happy with the turnout and participation so far," said Tipper. "The citizens have been supportive and engaged. It has really been a community driven process."

"The big challenge so far is that people are still in recovery mode. People are not back in their homes," said Zaninovich. "But even given those circumstances, people have still been willing to come out and give their input."

The process will continue with additional meetings scheduled for April 5 and May 3 from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM at the Vernonia Community Church. The Bridges Planning Group will be working with citizens to clarify the priorities that were identified at the March 20 meeting. The group will also help create a formal set of standards and values that may influence the location of the new school campus. There is also a plan to form action teams among community members to work to make sure the community priorities and plans start moving towards implementation.

"The decisions that are made in the immediate future are going to affect this community for a long time," said Tipper. "A thoughtful community discussion will be very beneficial."

"I hope that those who have already attended will encourage their family and friends to come to the rest of the meetings," said Jones. "The people who come to these meetings do really have a chance to shape the future of Vernonia. The process that Bridges is using emphasizes that. The priorities that come out of this are directly from those who show up."

If you need more information about the Vernonia 2020 Vision process you can contact the Bridges Planning Group at [bridgesplanning@gmail.com](mailto:bridgesplanning@gmail.com), or call Jesse Jones at the City of Vernonia 503-429-5291.

# Remembering "Nita"

Juanita "Nita" Abigail Olivo, 78, of Lincoln City, OR left this world on Sunday, March 16, 2008 at the home of her daughter Deborah VonHeeder, of Vernonia, OR after a six month battle with lung cancer. She was diagnosed after the removal of a brain tumor in April of



2007. Juanita lived the last six months with Deborah and Kerry Lyon at their home in Vernonia. Her stay was enhanced by the fine care given by the Washington County HOSPICE group. Special thanks to Ginger and Sheena.

Born May 13, 1929 in Oklahoma, to Marvin Clyde and Hazel Fern Mask. She graduated in the class of 1947 from Robert A. Long High School, Longview, WA 1948. She thoroughly enjoyed her 60th Class Reunion last August. Special thanks to Monty, Priscilla Slotten and Marilyn Miller, classmates. Nita married three times during her life. First was to James L Price of Stanwood, WA and ended in divorce. She married Glen V "Pete" Rowe in March, 1968, who later died as a result of an automobile accident. The third marriage to Reuben Olivo led her to near twenty years of adventure living in Guadalajara, Mexico. It was the death of her father, Clyde Mask, that brought her back to the states where she lived in Lincoln City, OR near her mother, Fern Mask until she passed away in January, 2006. Nita was preceded in death by her parents Marvin Clyde Mask and Hazel Fern Mask; her brothers' Albert Glendale Mask, James Wendell Mask; and daughter, Susan Rochelle Price.

Nita was a talented individual. She was involved in music her whole life. She was a member of the Lakeside Chapter of the Sweet Adelines in the early 60's. She was part of a Sweet Adelines Quartet called "Notes of A Chord". Early in the 70's while residing in Vernonia, OR, Nita performed in a local melodrama, "Paupers Playhouse." Cooking was another talent that Nita enjoyed - especially baking. Her pies were a favorite at family functions. Her other interests and hobbies were painting, crocheting and doll collecting. She loved shopping at the Goodwill and second-hand stores. More recently she sang the lead as a member of the "Beach Notes" of Lincoln City, OR. Nita was also involved with the Ocean Lake Emblem Club since 2001.

Nita held a variety of jobs in her life. She worked as an inspector at an egg factory, for Scott Paper Company, as a nailer/packer at Mist Shake and Ridge, a cook at the Timbernook, performed soldering at Intel, and as a card dealer at the Elks Club.

Survived by her sister, Joyce Marie Johnson, of Lincoln City; brother, Marvin Clyde Mask, of Kettle Falls, WA; sons, Larry Wayne Price, of Granite Falls, WA, James Clyde Price and Michael Scott Price, both of Seattle, WA, and Wm A "Billy" Price, of Rose Valley, WA; daughters, Deborah Jean VonHeeder, of Vernonia, OR, Bonita Gail Quinn, of Albany, OR, Joyce Annette Cupp, of Salem OR; 15 grandchildren; 12 great grandchildren and numerous cousins, nieces and nephews.

A celebration of life was held on Sunday, March 30 at in Rose Valley, WA.

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