

An Opinion: With Patience, Persistence and Unity We Will Succeed

By Scott Laird

The statements by Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski in mid-February that Vernonia reconstruction was one of three top projects he would like to see funded with economic stimulus funds in his state was obviously good news for Vernonia. It was also a just reward for some of our community and civic leaders who have worked extremely hard to keep Vernonia on the Governor and other policy makers' radar. It was also a call for this community to unite and work together to use this opportunity and make the most of it.

When the Governor talks about financial aid for Vernonia, it wasn't just our schools that are being mentioned. Wastewater treatment, bio-mass power generation, and assistance for other essential services are being CONSIDERED as potential projects for funding. The big word here is considered. Because even though being on the list of priority projects is a very good place to be, the Governor's comments are not a guarantee that Vernonia will receive any actual funding.

Being mentioned by the Governor so prominently while announcing his intentions to seriously pursue stimulus funding has to be satisfying for Vernonia leaders like County Commissioner Tony Hyde, Mayor Sally Harrison, School Superintendent Ken Cox, and School Board Chair Kim Wallace, among others. These people have shouldered the burden of rebuilding a ravaged community, a responsibility that has weighed heavily on each of them. They have consistently stayed in contact with the Governor, his staff, our federal representatives, state agency leaders, local officials and our community, leaving no stone unturned in the search for assistance to rebuild Vernonia. They have been true champions for this community. And the hard work is just starting.

Things have not moved forward as fast as some of us would have liked, but it appears that our patience and their persistence may be paying off.

All potential projects will have to be submitted to and pass

muster with the Governor's Oregon Way Advisory Group before being approved at the federal level. Shovel-ready projects are supposed to be the priority, and in that regard, Vernonia may already be behind and need to hustle to catch up. In states everywhere, county and community leaders are dusting off plans for projects that have been halted because of the economic downturn. Those projects just need to be updated and submitted-- Vernonia's projects are not yet shovel-ready.

Moving forward quickly, strategically, and finding ways to fast-track procedures will improve our chances of getting projects funded. We have already been identified as a strong and resilient community-- a community worthy of assistance and support. Decision makers have shown a willingness to invest in us. We need to prove that their trust in us is valid. We need to work together with a unified message. If we do so, our chances for success will improve.

Unity, and an aggressive timeline was the message from the Oregon Solutions team appointed by the Governor last year to assist Vernonia with siting and funding for new schools. The Oregon Solutions team has approved a site recommendation which now goes to the Vernonia School Board, which is scheduled to debate the issue on March 12. Choosing the site is one small hurdle on the way to getting projects funded in Vernonia. Passing a local bond in November to help fund school construction will probably be another. Both are chances for this community to show we are unified.

Consensus is a tool that is taught to working groups, and although our city and school board are not run by consensus, there are some principles involved in this form of decision-making that our community leaders-- and the rest of us-- would be wise to consider. Consensus, as it is usually thought of, means everyone agreeing on a common goal. That would be the short answer most of us would give when asked what consensus means. But it's more complicated than that. One of the principles is that if you disagree with a group decision, you agree not to stand in the way of progress-- that you will not work against the project and the group decision. If you have a different opinion, or an alternate idea, yes, by all means, bring it up. But if the group appears ready to move forward in a direction different than yours-- for the good of the group, you need to get on board, and help your team move forward.

We are now one big working group here in Vernonia. We can try to learn from our past mistakes, but right now we can't really spend a lot of time looking back, we need to be looking forward. It's a new day in Vernonia. We have a tremendous opportunity to get new schools built for our students, to get help to make improvements for our community-- to make things better here. If we all work together with unity and commitment, we have a chance to accomplish great things.

Columbia County Transit Plan Community Meetings Scheduled

Columbia County will be holding three Community Meetings to share information and to seek public feedback about two transit planning projects that affect County residents and workers.

The meetings are scheduled for:

- **Thursday, March 5, 2009**
Hump's Restaurant
50 E Columbia River Hwy
Clatskanie, Oregon
Time: 12:00 Noon
Co-sponsored by the Clatskanie Chamber of Commerce
- **Wednesday, March 18, 2009**
Vernonia Senior Center
446 Bridge Street
Vernonia, Oregon, 97064
Time: 11:30 a.m.
- **Monday, March 30, 2009**
St. Helens Senior Center
375 S 15th Street
St. Helens, Oregon
Time: Noon
Co-Sponsored by the St. Helens Senior Center

Some of these meetings are being conducted in conjunction with or before regularly scheduled events hosted by co-sponsoring groups but will also be open to other members of the public.

County Transit Division Staff and consultants working on this project want to hear people's opinions about transit-related recommendations, including transit fares; improvements to fixed-route bus and demand-response bus service; and the design and location of potential facilities improvements.

Columbia County, through the Columbia County Transit Division, is currently undertaking a comprehensive look at how to provide better access to public transportation within the county. Columbia County Rider, a service of Columbia County Transit Division, provides general public transportation within Columbia County, with services to surrounding counties. Two related projects-- the Columbia County Community-wide Transit Plan Update and the US 30 Transit Access Plan-- are currently underway and will assess the effectiveness of current transit services and facilities. Draft recommendations for the two projects have been identified and will be described at the upcoming meetings.

The Transit Plan Update builds on the Columbia County Community-wide Transit Plan, adopted in 2002, and the Coordinated Transit Services Plan, completed in 2007. The updated Transit Plan will provide further direction for the planning and implementation of transit services, operations, facilities, funding, and promotion/information efforts for the next 10 years.

In concert with the Transit Plan update, Columbia County is developing a Transit Access Management Plan for US 30. This related project will identify improvements for pedestrian and bicycle access to transit on the US 30 corridor, develop designs for urban and rural bus stops/pullouts, and create a program for park-and-ride or park-and-pool lots. Recommended improvements within the corridor will build on, and will be consistent with, the existing and recommended future transit system that is identified in the Transit Plan.

Recommendations from these projects will be presented at the meetings along with a variety of opportunities to comment on them. More information will be available on the Columbia County Transit Division Web site within the next several days.

Readers lend their voices...

The Girls from the Cadette Girl Scout # 2067, Would like to thank the individuals and businesses that donated to the 'Meals-on-wheels three day emergency boxes'. Without your help we could not have provided these people with these supplies. Thank you to: Anonomous from Mike Pihl Logging, Anonomous - T.B., Absolute Marble and Granite, Lindsay from Mike Pihl Logging, Karin Davenport from Spirals, and Craig from True Value Hardware.

Cadette Girl Scouts in troop #2067
Felica, Amanda, Sara & Tori

HOW TO SEND LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Vernonia's Voice welcomes and requests your thoughts, opinions, and ideas. Please include your name, address, and phone number; limit your letters to 300 words or less. Vernonia's Voice reserves the right to edit, omit, respond, or ask for a response to letters submitted. We will print letters, space permitting. Deadline is the 20th of the month. **Email to: news@vernoniasvoice.com or mail to: Letters, PO Box 55, Vernonia 97064.**

COLUMBIA COUNTY CLERK - DOG LICENSE DIVISION COUNTY COURTHOUSE - 230 STRAND ST. ST. HELENS, OR 97051 503-397-3796

Oregon Revised Statute 433.375 requires that every person owning or keeping any dog which has a set of permanent canine teeth or is six months of age, whichever come first, shall within thirty days after becoming the owner or keeper of the dog, and yearly thereafter, procure from the county a license for the dog.

There will be a grace period until March 2, 2009 after which any person owning or keeping an unlicensed dog will be subject to a fine of up to \$250.00.

A license may be obtained by mailing this application to the address given above, or in person at the County Clerks office, main floor, Columbia County Courthouse.

FEES

\$30.00 yearly for unaltered dog

\$12.00 yearly for spayed/neutered dog

There will be an amnesty period from January 1, 2009 to March 2, 2009

After March 2, 2009 there will be a \$25.00 penalty.

PLEASE CALL FOR SENIOR DISCOUNT

A current **Rabies Vaccination Certificate** and correct fee (including appropriate penalties) must accompany this application. NOTE: Your dog's rabies vaccination must be valid for at least 10 months of the licensing year. Spay/Neuter Certificates must also be enclosed if applicable for the reduced fees to apply.

DOG LICENSE APPLICATION

Dog's Name	Sex	Spayed/Neutered	Fees
Breed	Color	Do you live inside city?	
Rabies Expiration Date	Veterinary Clinic Name/City		
Owner's Name	Telephone Number		
Street Address	Mailing Address		
City	State	Zip Code	

If you have any questions, please contact the Columbia County Animal Control Division at 503-397-3935 or come to the County Animal Shelter, located at 2084 Oregon Street, St. Helens, OR.