

Columbia County Planning Recommends UGB Expansion for Vernonia

By April Bamburg

The construction of Vernonia's new school complex moved forward on Aug. 17 with a unanimous recommendation from the Columbia County Planning Commission that the Board of County Commissioners approve the expansion of the city's urban growth boundary by just 22 acres-- land needed to site the proposed school complex.

Project Manager Steve Effros, who attended the meeting on behalf of school superintendent Dr. Ken Cox, characterized the new school complex as a community center.

Effros, of Aadland Evans Constructors, Inc., a Beaverton-based company, is working with Ken Cox and the selected architectural firm, Boora Architects.

The project is currently in the first of three phases, and the first phase, creation of schematic designs, should be complete by the middle of October. Following the bond election, the district is expected to move forward with design development and construction documents. All three processes should be complete by Spring, 2010. Construction could begin next June with a targeted move-in date of Fall, 2010.

In addition, there is a series of land-use reviews and issues related to the site that the district and city are working to resolve, Effros said. When the first three steps-- the schematics, design development and construction documents-- are completed, Effros said the project moves into a process typical of any building or construction project-- obtaining permits and related permissions.

Effros said that the project must meet a higher threshold of scrutiny, on account of federal funding. This includes requirements on wetland mitigation and other environmental requirements.

"In managing and presenting [this project] to the district, I have worked backward from the Fall, 2011 move in-- the drop-dead date," Effros said. He estimates that construction should begin in June, 2010, and be completed with several months to allow the district to move in.

The planning commission unanimously recommended that County Commissioners Rita Bernhard, Tony Hyde and Earl Fisher approved this request for an urban growth boundary expansion, with four conditions:

The comprehensive plan designation for all three properties shall be changed from single-family residential and rural residential to urban growth boundary.

Zoning shall be Community Service Institutional, until annexed into the city.

The subject property shall be used only for a community school.

The applicant must provide documentation in response to concerns from the Department of Land Conservation and Development regarding transportation updates.

The deadline for compliance with the fourth condition is September 8, because, according to Glenn Higgins, that is the date that the city will discuss the urban growth boundary issue further.

Carol Connell, Vernonia City Planner, represented the city in this hearing, and stated that the city had not gone into detail about proposed transportation upgrades and changes in this application because they weren't sure that it was necessary.

The Vernonia Planning Commission held a hearing on the UGB expansion and unanimously approved a recommendation to the Vernonia City Council on August 13, 2009.

A New Kiwanis Club Organizes in Vernonia

The Kiwanis Club of St. Helens will sponsor a new Kiwanis Club in Vernonia. St. Helens Kiwanis President Glen Higgins was in town with Kiwanians Alice Robertson and Emil Nyberg to help solicit new members on Thursday, August 27th. Glen was very impressed with the number of people that are interested in belonging to this new service club that is dedicated to serving the children of the world and has plans to start a Key Club in Vernonia High School.

With a goal of sending 2 or more students to the Key Leader Program at Mt. Hood Kiwanis Camp October 9-11, the new club hopes to sponsor the Key Club by the first of November. Dr. Kenneth Cox, Superintendent of the Vernonia Schools said, "They had a large Key Club at my former high school and I have seen the positive influence it had on all the high school students." High School Principal Nate Underwood is quoted: "Not only will it (the Key Club) benefit our students' lives, it will benefit our school, and the whole community will benefit." Key Club is the largest service club for high school students in the world. It

is one of several sponsored leadership programs that Kiwanis has to offer for the youth.

Sgt. Michael Kay of the Vernonia Police Department is a former Key Club member from his high school in Corvallis. He knows first-hand how exciting Key Club can be and how much difference the club can have on a community. He joined the new Kiwanis Club and volunteered to help recruit more new members.

The new club will have an organizational meeting on Monday, September 21, at 6:30 PM at Mariolino's Pizza, 721 Madison Ave. Everyone is invited to learn more about Kiwanis and have an opportunity to join this wonderful organization that will make Vernonia a better place to live and raise our children. For more information, call Emil Nyberg at 503-338-7400 or Alice Robertson at 360-560-3301, or click into Kiwanis International on the web at www.kiwanis.org or Key Club International at www.keyclub.org.

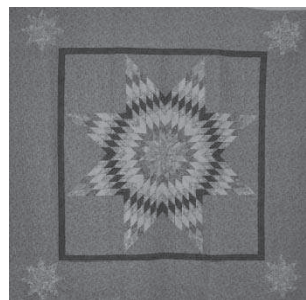
Vernonia Hires New Public Works Director

Bob Ruhl is the new Vernonia Public Works Director, beginning work on Monday, Aug. 24. Mr. Ruhl comes from Garden City, Idaho, where he retired from over 30 years of Public Works involvement. He is now working part-time as the Director, providing administrative oversight to the four Public Works employees of Vernonia.

Mr. Ruhl has been involved in all facets of public works, from funding to construction. His achievements include comprehensive Plan work ("Master Plan" in other states) that received the "Smart Growth Award" for the state of Idaho, implementation of a new billing software (Springbrook), a completed utility master plan, and generation of a financial planning document that reflects policy. He has had proven success over the years in water and sewer utilities, management, organization and overall work ethic among employees.

"I am delighted to have a person of this expertise on board with us," stated Bob Young, City Administrator. "We are facing the construction of a new wastewater system, upgrading our storm water system, and a myriad of other public works projects that Mr. Ruhl has experienced during his long public works tenure."

This is the second half-time department director to be hired by the city, along with the new Police Chief. "This gives us the experience and mentorship our departments need," said Young, "along with budget-sensitive oversight for our employees. I think for now this best fits where we are in the growth and rebuilding of our community."



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