

# VERNONIA'S voice

reflecting the spirit of our community

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## Town Hall Provides School Project Updates

A Town Hall Meeting, organized by the Vernonia School District, was held on September 13, 2011 at the Vernonia School Cafeteria. Over fifty people were in attendance for the evening meeting.

The meeting provided updates on the fundraising efforts and the construction of the school campus. A team from Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) was on hand with plans for the improvements to OR Highway 47, also called Bridge Street, and Missouri and Texas Avenues. The community was also introduced to Kurt Lango of Lango Hansen, the firm that has been chosen to create a design for the new Spencer Park at the site of the current schools.

Another Town Hall has been scheduled for October 20, 2011, specifically to receive community input for the design of the new Spencer Park.

Construction of the School campus continues on schedule, with the new campus expected to be open for students in the fall of 2012.

ODOT representatives provided a detailed design for the Highway 47/Bridge Street improvements, which are being paid for with a \$3.9 million grant from ODOT. The design calls for the widening of the highway on either side of Missouri Avenue, which will be the main access street leading to the new K-12 school campus. There will be a left turn lane added in the north bound direction of Highway 47 for motorists turning onto Missouri Avenue. The plan includes wider sidewalks and bike lanes on both sides of the highway with the south sidewalk being widened to ten feet. The marked crosswalk at Texas Avenue will be removed to encourage use of the new crosswalk at Missouri Avenue. The new crosswalk at Missouri Avenue will include better illumination for pedestrians crossing the highway and Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons to alert drivers to pedestrians.

Missouri Avenue will be widened to include a ten

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## Sentry Constructs Flood Wall

If you stopped by to shop, or even just driven by the Vernonia Sentry Market recently, you couldn't help but notice the construction happening around the building. If you haven't already asked then you are probably wondering, "What are they doing?"

What they are doing is constructing a flood wall to help keep out water in the event of a future flood. In December of 2007 the Sentry Market had over twenty-two inches of water inside the store, causing hundreds of thousands of dollars in damages to their stock. In 1996 there was over seventeen inches of water in the store.

"It is nothing special—it's just a wall to keep the majority of the water out," says Sentry owner Randy Parrow about the flood wall. "We figure there will be some leakage somewhere—we'll have a pump, squeegee it to there and pump it out. But we hope we'll just be dealing with an inch or two of water."

The flood wall will be four feet at its highest point and consist of sealed cement blocks that will encircle the entire building. The blocks extend underground one foot below the footings of the building. There will be six openings to allow access to the building. Those openings will be sealed with specially designed flood gates--metal doors that fit



*Bud Boldon of Bolden Construction in Forest Grove working on the Sentry's flood wall.*

into the blocks and can be put in place and hand-cranked tight in case of a high water event.

As part of the construction of the wall, new windows will be installed along the store front. The bottom sill of the previous windows sat below the high water level—the new windows will be placed above the top of the new flood wall.

According to Parrow the building will also be receiving a facelift with new wood siding, a solid awning across the front, and an outdoor, covered shopping cart corral. "Since we were doing this flood wall construction we decided it was a good time to do a facade upgrade," said Parrow.

FEMA funds will pay for

seventy-five percent of the cost for the flood wall construction. Parrow estimated the cost to be around \$200,000. "The cost of this versus building a new store that would have cost millions—we felt like this was the way to go," explained Parrow. Parrow was clear that the FEMA funds are only paying for the flood wall, they are not being used for the other building upgrades.

The project is being constructed by Five-Star Builders. Bud Boldon of Bolden Construction in Forest Grove is doing the actual masonry wall construction work.

Parrow says the project is expected to be completed by the end of October.

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## Providence Clinic Leaving Vernonia Vernonia Health Center Board is Working on a Replacement Plan

By Scott Laird

According to a flyer being handed out at the Providence Medical Clinic in Vernonia, Providence Health & Services is leaving Vernonia at the end of this calendar year.

"Currently, Providence has no plans to continue clinic operations after the end of the year," says the flyer that is being handed to Providence patients at the Vernonia clinic.

The Vernonia Health Center Board (VHCB) owns the building and provides the space for Providence to provide health care for the community. That building was flooded in 2007 and the VHCB was mandated by FEMA requirements, as a vital community service, to move from its current location.

Since the Flood of

December 2007 the VHCB has been working to find a suitable location and sufficient funds, but currently lacks the resources needed to move the clinic on their own.

In September 2010 Providence said they were willing to help the VHCB in their relocation, offering to let the VHCB keep equipment currently in use at the clinic. There is also an account controlled by Providence that is holding approximately \$140,000 that was collected after the flood in 2007 to help Vernonia rebuild its health clinic.

Gary Walker, Regional Director of Public Affairs for Providence provided additional information in a prepared response from Providence to questions about the split from the VHCB.

"These combined donations of cash and equipment have a value of more than \$200,000,"

said the prepared statement from Providence. "We have not yet been notified by the board whether the clinic will continue in operation or shut down for a period of time. Once the board has an opportunity to finalize its plans, Providence will be working with the board and the community to determine the best ways to use these funds to help provide a place for a sustainable clinic operation in Vernonia in the future."

That still leaves a significant shortfall of funds needed to actually move the clinic facility.

Last summer the VHCB began exploring other options and developed a plan to become a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC). In the fall of 2010 the VHCB made a grant application to become a FQHC in partnership with Coastal Family Health Center which operates a medical clinic in

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