

Vernonia School Board Report

At the Vernonia School Board Meeting on May 9, 2013

Board Holds Budget Committee Meeting-After calling the regular School Board Meeting to order, the meeting was recessed and the School Board convened with the Budget Committee to hold the first Budget Meeting. The Budget Committee elected a Chair and Vice Chair, was presented with the Budget message by Superintendent Ken Cox and briefly reviewed the Budget document. The next Budget Committee meeting is scheduled for May 23rd. (See full story on this page.)

Public Comment-During the Public Comment Portion of the Meeting, Vernonia teacher Juliet Saffier, President of the Vernonia Education Association, spoke on behalf of the teachers she represents. Saffier read a prepared statement in which she expressed frustration with continuing budget shortfalls. Saffier stated that the teachers don't trust the numbers presented in the budget because of past adjustments that have needed to be made in the budget. Saffier expressed concern about continuing cuts to staff and called for an independent

audit of the budget outside help in budget preparation. Amy Cieloha expressed concerns about follow through on decisions that are made during School Board meetings. Cieloha was especially concerned about middle school sports programs and the school band program. Cieloha asked questions about funds that were raised to support the band program and what happened to that money. Superintendent Cox said he would look into the band issue.

Board Hears Student Reports-The School Board heard Student Reports from Middle School Leadership Students Chase Tolonen, Brent Jones and Tristan Adams. The students updated the Board on various activities in the school including: the sixth grade play, activities in the Leadership Class, the Close-Up Trip to Washington D.C., the track team, Topper News, and art projects.

Alexis Baska represented the high school and updated the Board on high school activities including: The SKID event put on by the OSSOM Club, along with other safety activities that discourage teen drinking and driving and drug use, student elections, the band competing at the State competition, the Forestry Class,

VHS Sports, Doernbecher Days, Spring Fling and Prom.

Cox Announces Retirement-Superintendent Ken Cox announced that he has submitted his resignation to the Board with the expectation that he would be hired back at half-time while he searches for a new position. Cox recommended the Board begin the required process of a public survey to establish desired qualifications for a new Superintendent. The Board later accepted Cox's resignation and agreed to hire him back as Interim Superintendent to work half-time.

District Agrees to Rent Office Space to UNWC-The Board approved an agreement with the Upper Nehalem Watershed Council (UNWC) for the use of the downstairs portion of the District office. The UNWC will use the space as their office meeting area and storage space.

Board Approves Robotics Competition-The Board approved the Robotics team traveling to Vancouver to take part in a competition. The trip will be paid for by donations.

Vernonia School Budget Forecast is Gloomy

The Vernonia School District Budget Committee met for the first time this year during the regular School Board Meeting on May 9, 2013. The Budget the Committee was presented includes several cuts again this year.

The Committee elected Brett Costley as Chair and Don Shulte as Vice Chair.

Superintendent Dr. Ken Cox presented the budget message. Cox

informed the Committee that the General Fund Budget includes revenue of \$6.2 million, an increase of 5.78% over last year, and is based on State School Fund Estimates and an increase in anticipated Vernonia Education Foundation donations to pay for two construction loans.

Cox explained that the budget includes projected increases in student enrollment and if those increases do not

occur the District will need to consider additional changes to the budget.

According to Cox a lower student count and the funding the District will receive from the state does not meet the District's current needs. Cox, in the budget he presented, recommended the following cuts in order to balance the budget:

- Cutting five days where all staff members in the district do not report for work.

- Reducing most supply budgets by 20%

- Not replacing a retiring teacher, eliminating three part-time teaching positions (Shop, Spanish, Elementary PE), significantly reducing the Business Manager position, and cutting the Superintendent position to .5 FTE.

Cox informed the Committee that the district expects to receive grants

totaling \$75,000. He also told the Committee that the budget includes a contingency fund and unappropriated ending balance of \$117, 662 which is just 1.7% of the general fund budget. That amount should be at least 5%. Cox also informed the Committee that the Special Fund accounts which receive federal funding will be operating with a 7% decrease due to sequestration of federal funding. These funds include Title I and Special Education.

In his summary statement Cox said, "The proposed budget reflects a focus on core academics rather than more optimal whole child programs and activities. While this budget does not meet all the current needs of the district, it does fulfill our fiscal responsibility to the patrons of the Vernonia School District."

The next Budget Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 23 at 6:00 PM.

Hands-on Development Provides Summer Programing for Disabled Children

Hands-on Development is a new program that will provide structured summer activities in Vernonia for children with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities that rely on structure and routine to maintain and improve quality of life.

Hands-on Development is intended to serve these children and their families, and will begin on July 1st and run through August 31st on Mondays and Wednesdays, from 12:00-3:00 PM.

Activities will include the Summer Meals Program, a rotation of art and music, social skills program, a Natural Resources Curriculum that has been adopted by the Vernonia School District, story time, structured play, and community living skills.

There will be no cost to participants in the program.

Those interested in participating as a student or as a volunteer, please contact Jeana Gump 503-819-1511.

VSD Volunteers Wanted!

The Vernonia Schools are lucky to have dedicated volunteers. Our volunteers work in classrooms, chaperone field trips, help with band and robotics and so much more. All volunteers complete a criminal background check before starting and renew the check every three years.

Current Volunteer opportunities available:

Breakfast Buddy - 7:30am - 8:00am once each week

Lunch Buddy - 10:45am - 11:30am once each week

Classroom help - grades K - 5, hours vary

Sustainability Days - help weed, plant, and clean during day-long project

Career Class Guest Speakers

For more information, please contact:

Vernonia School District Office at 503-429-1333

Spencer Health and Wellness School Based Health Center

is open to patients on

Tuesdays and Fridays from 7:30 AM - 1:30 PM

Vernonia School District Volunteer of the Month April 2013

Dewey Deweber

Mr. Deweber is an exceptional volunteer. He volunteers 3-4 days a week to read with students in kindergarten and 1st grade. With his assistance, students are excited



about reading and have become confident readers. Mr. Deweber enjoys working with our kids and they love him! They especially enjoy the stories he tells and his magic tricks. He is an incredible volunteer and is appreciated for his kindness and generosity.