

## Cox Ends Tenure as School Superintendent

Dr. Kenneth Cox has ended his time as the Superintendent of the Vernonia School District. Cox took part in his last School Board meeting on Thursday, June 12, 2014, leaving behind a legacy of service that went



“Thank you Ken for your years of service and for being a friend to all of us and for being a friend to Vernonia, and a friend to the students and staff of this school and to the whole community,” said School Board Chairman Bill Langmaid at the conclusion of Cox’s final meeting. “This [new school] wouldn’t have happened without you. We owe you a great debt of gratitude.”

Cox was the new Superintendent in Vernonia when the community was devastated by the December 3, 2007 flood which damaged the Washington Grade School, the Vernonia Middle School and the Vernonia High School buildings.

Cox has worked tirelessly since that day in 2007, helping perform the herculean task of rebuilding the entire school district and constructing a brand new K-12 school campus that is outside the flood plain in less than five years. He managed the initial demolition of part of the Vernonia High School and arranged for modular classrooms to be brought in to serve students and faculty on an interim basis.

beyond the call of duty.

Cox, who has been Superintendent of the Vernonia School District since 2006, has accepted a position as Superintendent of the Minidoka County Joint School District #331, located in Rupert, Idaho. The Minidoka district serves 4,000 students in four elementary schools, two middle schools, and a high school, as well as alternative middle and high schools.

Vernonia Elementary School Principal Aaron Miller succeeds Cox as the Superintendent. He

In 2009 he helped orchestrate a \$13 million bond campaign that raised the initial funds for the new school construction, setting the stage for the community to leverage additional private, philanthropic, state and federal funding sources.

Cox served on the Oregon Solutions Team, designated by then Governor Ted Kulongoski, to secure a suitable location for the new campus and raise the funds to build it. He

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## Council Moves Forward with City Administrator Search

The Vernonia City Council met in a special work session on Saturday, June 7 to screen applicants for the permanent City Administrator position.

City Councilors reviewed thirteen applications for the position and decided to invite five applicants to be interviewed.

The City Administrator position has been vacant since the City Council voted to terminate their contract with Bill Haack in December of 2013. Mayor Joesette Mitchell has been serving as a volun-

teer Interim City Administrator. Mitchell had stated previously that she intended to apply for the permanent position. Council did not announce the names of any of the applicants.

Interviews are scheduled for July 12<sup>th</sup>. The interview process will include interviews by three separate panels: a panel of citizen representatives and one representative from each of the city committees, staff panel made up of department heads, and the City Council.

## PCC to Build Campus in Columbia County

Portland Community College has begun plans to develop an education center in Columbia County.

The campus will be built with funding already secured from a bond measure passed by voters in 2008.

PCC hosted a working breakfast with local business leaders on Thursday, June 5 in St. Helens to discuss what programs and services to provide at the new center. The breakfast was moderated by new PCC Rock Creek Campus President Sandra Fowler-Hill.

“This is no longer hypothetical,” said State Senator Betsy Johnson at the breakfast meeting. “We are starting this partnership.” Over 50 local leaders attended the meeting which featured small group discussions. Many public and business sectors were represented including energy production, manufacturing, natural resources, construction, law enforcement, public education, public administration, and media.

PCC also hosted two public forums to discuss the new campus, one

on June 10 at Scappoose High School and one on June 11 at St. Helens High School.

According to information made available at the meetings, and re-iterated by Fowler-Hill, PCC is committed to building a physical center in South Columbia County where they will provide more comprehensive programing including credit courses, community education courses, student services and career technical programing.

Senator Johnson was very upbeat when discussing the potential regional benefits of constructing a local campus. Johnson noted that when PCC was considering building the Rock Creek campus in Washington County people did not visualize the regional growth that would be associated with the new campus. “The opportunity to have PCC in Columbia County will be a catalyst for this county,” said Johnson.

No specific site for the new campus in Columbia County has yet been finalized. Construction is expected to be completed prior to 2017.

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## Bonamici Holds Town Hall in Vernonia

US Congresswoman Suzanne Bonamici held a Town Hall meeting at the Vernonia Schools Commons on Saturday, June 7, 2014.

Bonamici, who represents Oregon’s 1<sup>st</sup> Congressional House District, which includes all of Columbia, Clatsop, Washington and Yamhill and parts of Multnomah Counties, met with local constituents for over an hour. Bonamici, who is running for re-election in November, discussed current issues she is working on as well as concerns raised by attendees.

In her opening remarks Bonamici noted that she represents a very diverse district which includes urban, suburban, rural and coastal communities as well as forestry, fishing, agriculture and high tech. “That’s what makes it wonderful and that’s what always inspires me to look at things from every different perspective,” said Bonamici

Bonamici, who is earning a

reputation as a collaborator in congress who is willing to work across party lines, told the audience that since the government shutdown last October she has seen a willingness of congressional leaders to try to work together. “That shutdown was a big wake up call,” said Bonamici. Bonamici noted that since the shutdown, congress was able to pass a budget and the Omnibus Appropriations Act to fund agencies.

Bonamici, who serves on the Science Committee and Education Committee, noted that she supported the Farm Bill, which was passed but cut funding for food stamps benefits, because, “...it had so much good in it for Oregon.” Bonamici said the Farm Bill provided benefits for Oregon’s specialty crops, organic farmers, food banks, and pesticide research.

Bonamici told the audience that the House just passed two bills that she introduced, one that would



expedite funding for marine debris emergency clean-up and the other would allow communities to be re-

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