

VSD to Explore Charter School Application

By Scott Laird

Vernonia School District Superintendent Aaron Miller has announced the District will explore a proposal to consider making an application to become a charter school.

"We are considering moving forward with applying for charter school status for a significant portion of the students in our district," said Miller.

Miller and the School Board discussed the opportunity at a board workshop on January 29, 2015. The Board unanimously gave Miller the green light to move forward and begin studying the possibility of having a portion of the school district create a charter proposal.

"There are a lot of things to consider through the application process and what it means as far as the programs and curriculum we provide for our students," said Miller, "but there some very real resource opportunities and benefits to us becoming a charter school."

Miller says a steering committee made up of teachers, classified staff, district administration, parents and other community members will be formed immediately to begin considering a charter school option.

"If we do choose this option we want to make sure we have a product that is going to work for everybody—students first, but the teachers, parents and community as well," says Miller.

According to the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) a charter school in Oregon is a public school operated by a group of parents, teachers and/or community members as a semi-autonomous school of choice within a school district. It is given the authority to operate under a contract or "charter" between the members of the charter school community and the local board of education (sponsor). Under Oregon law, a charter school is a separate legal entity operating under a binding agreement with a sponsor. A public charter school is subject to certain laws pertaining to school district public schools, is released from others, and must operate consistent with the charter agreement.

At the January 29 school board workshop Miller introduced the idea of applying for charter school status to the Board and shared information about what constitutes a charter school, the application process, the School Board's role and the potential benefits.

"I think the community of Vernonia should explore

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Pipeline Safety a Concern at Oregon LNG Meeting

By Scott Laird

About fifty citizens were in attendance on January 29, 2015 at the Cabin in Vernonia during what was billed as an informational meeting hosted by the State of Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).

The project is being proposed by Oregon LNG and Oregon Pipeline, two related corporations that are currently seeking permits for the liquid natural gas processing project.



The project and permits are currently under review by several regulatory agencies.

Local citizens asked questions and raised concerns about the safety of a proposed natural gas high pressure pipeline that could be constructed near the Vernonia community and the accompanying export terminal in Warrenton.

The meeting was held to discuss the 401 water quality certification process for the Oregon LNG project which includes the export terminal and the eighty-five mile pipeline which crosses Columbia, Tillamook, and Clatsop Counties. Citizens were encouraged to ask questions and provide comments on the proposed project, specifically

relating to water quality. According to the public notice inviting citizens to attend, the meeting was not intended to answer technical questions about the project.

Sara Christensen, DEQ's 401 Water Quality Certification Coordinator, and Jennifer Purcell, Regional Coordinator for DEQ, were part of a panel who fielded questions from the audience. The panel also included Mike Turaski, Chief of Portland Permits Section and Richard Chong,

Project Manager, both from the US Army Corps of Engineers and Patrick Wingard from the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development.

The audience included Vernonia Mayor Josette Mitchell, Vernonia City Councilor Jill Hult, a representative from US House Representative Suzanne Bonamici's office and Dan Serres, Conservation Director for Columbia Riverkeeper, an environmental watch dog group which has been following this project for many years. No representative from Columbia County or state representative or senator's offices were in attendance.

The six billion dollar project, in develop-

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Meet New Library Director Shannon Romtvedt

Shannon Romtvedt is the new Director at the Vernonia Library. Romtvedt was a highly qualified candidate who was selected for the position by City staff in November.

Romtvedt, who lives outside Vernonia off Keasey Road with her young family, brings a professional education and experience in several other library systems. She says she is excited by the opportunity to work in her own hometown.

"One of my favorite things to hear as a librarian is: 'I didn't know where to start with this question, so I came to the library,'" said Romtvedt.

Romtvedt says she was interested in working in libraries from a young age. She grew up in West Salem, OR and enjoyed spending time at the local branch of her local library. "It was not much bigger than this Vernonia Library and I spent a lot of time there," remembers

Romtvedt. "As a kid I envisioned being the Librarian there."

Romtvedt did end up volunteering at her local library as a high school student, and enjoyed straightening the children's area and creating displays. "I had a lot of fun with that," she says.

Romtvedt attended George Fox University, majoring in Writing and Literature, graduating in 2005. While at George Fox Romtvedt did a work/study program at the university library. She also met her soon to be husband Brady Romtvedt at George Fox. Following graduation they moved together to Texas where Brady worked on a Master's Degree in Philosophy from



Baylor University.

Shannon worked at the local Waco Public Library, where her co-workers encouraged her to pursue additional education. "I knew we were going to be in Texas for a while, so I thought I might explore making

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