

Charter School Application *continued from front page*

forming a charter school," said Vernonia School Board President Bill Langmaid. "We need to expand our efforts to provide meaningful education for all our students, and the specialized education that can be made available through a charter school could be the perfect fit."

According to Miller, under ODE guidelines, at least one entity has to be maintained under the original school district. "For us that may be Mist School, the Vernonia Elementary School, the Middle School or the High School—we would have a myriad of options," said Miller. "And those would be options that the local steering committee would help us to decide what would be best for the District."

Miller says there are several important benefits to Vernonia becoming a charter school: moving current programs forward, increased flexibility in staffing which Miller says is a concern in many small school districts, and addressing debt reduction for the District.

Miller says access to additional resource opportunities could be used to expand the District's natural resources, science, technology, engineering and math programing. "These are areas of study the District is already focusing on," explains Miller. "It would provide resources to move those forward more effectively and at a quicker pace."

Miller says resources include funding for professional development for staff to help implement new and expanded programing and funding to purchase materials and supplies to complement curriculum.

In addition, Miller says charter schools in Oregon are not required to abide by all teacher licensing rules. "You still have to have highly qualified teachers in your core areas of reading, writing math and science," said Miller.

But in programs like Career and Technical Education (CTE), Natural Resources, and Forestry, which Vernonia already implements, or potential subjects like Health Care, Early Child Development, or Culinary Arts, instructors from the community with a degree or real world expertise could be utilized to teach course work.

Those additional financial resources could also help address the District's debt from the construction of the new school campus. "There is the potential that this could also impact our long term debt needs," said Miller, "which is directly and indirectly related to our student's success. If we have bills hanging over our heads, that takes away from what we can do for our kids."

According to Miller, funding from the state basically doubles for each student enrolled in the charter school in its second year of operation. "We would be looking to maximize that," said Miller. "Our debt is a very real concern that hangs over the District. Our new school building is very nice, it's energy efficient, it meets the needs of our students and staff, and it's a center piece for our community. But we need to get it paid off as soon as possible."

The process for the Vernonia School District adding a charter school would involve forming the steering committee to discuss the specifics of what the charter school would look like, which students to target and what the curriculum would focus on, and how the charter would be governed. The steering committee would develop and draft the charter proposal to be reviewed by the Vernonia School Board. The School Board would be required to hold a public meeting to consider comments from the community on the management plan for the charter school as well as elements of the curriculum, before making a final evaluation and decision to approve the charter proposal and submit it to the state. The ODE would then have to approve the application and grant the charter to the District.

Miller feels there are very few concerns or negatives to Vernonia becoming a charter school. Miller did mention that the community often has a difficult time finding people to assume leadership roles, such as School Board positions, City Council seats or City Committee members. "Those are tough

positions to fill sometimes in a small community," said Miller. "If we move forward with this there will still be a need to have a Vernonia School District Board in place, but there will also have to be a governing body for the charter school. Having enough people who are willing and able to take on a leadership role and be effective is a concern."

Public perception to change is another concern for Miller. "Change is difficult and hard for people," says Miller. "We've had a lot of changes recently in our district and our community and we need to recognize the difficulty people have with moving forward and having things change. So we really want to be inclusive in gathering input to make sure we are on the right track."

"We'll have to see how it plays out, but I'm pleased and optimistic by the support we've received during these initial stages in the process," said School Board President Langmaid. "A charter school would be another magnet drawing families to our community."

Miller says the application deadline is May 1, 2015, which if accepted, would allow the District to add a charter school next fall.

There are currently 125 charter schools in Oregon including St. Helens Arthur Academy in St. Helens, North Columbia Academy in Rainier, and South Columbia Family School and Sauvie Island Academy, both in Scappoose.

Anyone interested in participating in the steering committee should contact Superintendent Aaron Miller at the District Office at 503-429-5891.

VERNONIA'S
voice
reflecting the spirit of our community

Publisher and Managing Editor
Scott Laird
503-367-0098
scott@vernoniasvoice.com

Contributors

Britt Bensen Steele
Stacey Lynn
Aaron Miller
Karen Miller
Michal Smith
Grant Williams

Photography

Scott Laird

Want to advertise?
Have an article?
Contact: scott@vernoniasvoice.com

One year subscriptions
(24 issues) \$35

Vernonia's Voice is published
on the 1st and 3rd Thursday
of each month.

Vernonia's Voice, LLC
PO Box 55
Vernonia, OR 97064
503-367-0098



www.VernoniasVoice.com

2015 Vernonia Sportsman's Banquet

Saturday, April 18th

6:00 pm at Vernonia Christian Church - 410 North Street

Guest Speaker: Rick Barry

Elected into NBA Hall of Fame in 1987. Rick will be talking about his career in the NBA. He would like guests to email him questions; he will pick several to talk about during the banquet.
Email: rb24adventures@aol.com

Antler/Horn Show:

Entries for Best 2014 harvest, best women's entry, best youth entry (under 18 at harvest), best local harvest, best general entry

Tickets on Sale March 2

at R & S Market \$10 each
Only 300 tickets sold!

Door Prizes:

Rifle, Shotgun and more....

Raffle items include:

Trip for 2 for a wilderness fishing trip in Alaska. Rifles. Bows. Optics and much more....
100% of proceeds support Rapha House children's ministry.

Catered dinner by Cousin Kenny's BBQ

Vernonia Veterinary Clinic

Small and Large Animals



Now Open

Mon, Wed & Saturday
9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Call for Appointments
(503) 429-1612

Or 24 hr. Emergency Number (503) 397-6470
700 Weed Ave. Vernonia, OR

Cedar Side Inn

Sunday Breakfast

Now serving 10am-9pm

Karaoke

Every 2nd & Last Friday

Taco Tuesday

from opening until 9pm
3 hardshell or 1 softshell \$4.25

Ladies' Night

every Thursday 6pm-close

• Free Pool • Free WiFi • Specialty Pizzas

Check our Facebook page for daily specials and upcoming events
756 Bridge Street, Vernonia 503-429-5841



Happy Hour Mon-Fri 4-7
Lady's Night Wed 5-12

Events

Sat, Feb. 7th
Country/Western Night
with Patrick the DJ

Sat, Feb. 21st
Texas Hold 'Em

"STILL BIKER FRIENDLY"

- Specialty hamburgers
- Draft beer & mixed drinks
- Pool tables & satellite TV
- Pool Tourny Most Friday nights
- Free Wi-fi
- Beer & Kegs to go

Sun - Thurs 11 AM - Midnight • Fri - Sat 11 AM - 2:30 AM
733 Bridge St, Vernonia • 503-429-9999