

County Commissioners Have Coffee with Vernonians

Hyde says he's not in favor of LNG project

All three Columbia County Commissioners were on hand the morning of April 17 at a jam packed Black Iron Grill to have coffee and chat with Vernonia area citizens.

The visit was part of the Commissioners plan to visit each of the five cities in Columbia County to hear the concerns of the community.

The top item of concern was the proposed Oregon LNG and Oregon Pipeline projects, which was made obvious by the large number of red shirted activists in the room.

When asked what reasons they could site for supporting the LNG plant and pipeline which would transport natural gas across Columbia County, Commissioner Tony Hyde reversed previous statements he had made that indicated support of the project and stated he now believes the project has no reason for the support of the Board of Commissioners.

Hyde explained that the Commissioners have had several presentations about the proposed project over the last six years, which Hyde called "purely conjecture," and included the possibility of the gas line passing through the Mist fields and using storage facilities in that area in Columbia County. Hyde then made the following statement to applause from the audience, "What we found out recently was that this gas line that is going to the proposed 'Baby Baghdad in the Bay,' for lack of a better term, is not going to Mist field and has no reason for our support."

Hyde went on to say

that he did not believe the LNG plant, proposed to be constructed in Warrenton, will ever be built. "I know the Commissioners in Clatsop County don't support it and that the citizens, experiencing a renaissance during the last decade in Astoria, are very reticent."

Hyde added that he has had several conversations with local constituents which has helped add to his knowledge of the project and helped

sway his opinion.

When asked if the Columbia County Board of Commissioners will take policy action and publicly oppose the project, Hyde backed off and said all three Commissioners have not discussed the issue as a Board.

Commissioner Henry Heimuller reiterated that the project as currently proposed is different than what he originally understood it

to be, but said he could not commit to publicly opposing the project. "Right now I'm in research mode," said Heimuller. "I think there is more information to be had. We know what the potential risks are, but we don't know what the potential values are. Personally, if this is not going to utilize our infrastructure and we aren't going to get anything out of it that is going to benefit the taxpayers of Columbia County, I'm not going to be supportive."

Commissioner Earl Fisher told the audience that the job of the Commissioners is to listen to all their constituents, not just the groups that show up and yell at them. "I don't know enough about this issue to make a decision. You have an opinion and I'm sure there are some other opinions. As a decision maker I need to listen to both sides. If I don't, I'm not serving you well."

The discussion about the LNG projects monopolized a good portion of the discussion with audience members voicing their concerns about possible impacts to water quality and Vernonia's drinking water, the potential for devastating fires if there was an accident, the general

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School Board Approves Charter Application

The Vernonia School Board met in a special meeting on April 21 and voted unanimously to approve and sponsor a Charter School application to the Oregon Department of Education (ODE).

The Charter application was prepared by a steering committee made up of school staff, parents, school board members, school district partners and other interested citizens.

The charter application includes the entire Vernonia K-12 campus but leaves the Mist School separate from the charter and will require the creation of a separate School Board.

The District now has sixty days to submit the application and complete all paperwork with the ODE to become a Charter School in time for the start of the 2015-16 school year.

Vernonia School to Celebrate Green Certifications

The Vernonia School District will celebrate receiving LEED Platinum and Three Green Globes certifications at a ceremony on Saturday, May 9 at 10:30 AM.

The Vernonia School is the first K-12 school building in the United States to receive the coveted LEED Platinum certification.

The LEED green building rating system, developed and administered by the U.S. Green Building Council is the recognized standard for measuring building sustainability in the United States and in a number of other countries around the world. It is designed to promote design and construction practices that increase profitability while reducing the negative environmental impacts of buildings and improving occupant health and well-being.

The LEED rating system offers four certification levels for new construction - Certified, Silver, Gold and Platinum in five green design categories: sustainable sites, water efficiency, energy and atmosphere, materials and resources and indoor environmental quality.

Green Globes is nationally recognized green rating assessment and certification program.

Local elected officials and other dignitaries will be in attendance.

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Supporting Local Fire Protection: A Conversation with Chief Dean Smith

Vernonia citizens will have a chance to vote on two measures in the upcoming election that would support the Vernonia Rural Fire Protection District. The Fire District has placed Measure 5-245, a ten year bond for the purchase of a new fire engine, and Measure 5-246, a five year levy to fund a training officer for the district. According to Vernonia Fire Chief Dean Smith, both Measures are vital for helping local fire fighters continue to provide quality service to the community. The following is an excerpt from a recent conversation Vernonia's Voice had with Chief Smith.

Vernonia's Voice: Why are both these Measures so important for the Fire Dis-

trict?

Chief Smith: The operating levy, Measure 5-264, is important because I'm the only paid responder we have. I'm also paid to be an administrator. The duties that are required within a fire district and the tasks that need to be managed are always increasing and so is the amount of training our

volunteers are required to receive and stay current on. There is always something else that needs to be taken care of.

Our District is responding to a



record number of calls now and our volunteer levels have dropped to as low as I've ever seen them. We're at a point where our district needs to have another body in here that can take some of these tasks that need to be managed.

What we need is a Training Captain that can be dedicated to oversight and look at all

the aspects of our training program and make sure we're covering and tracking all the certification for our volunteers

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