

Salem Update



By Representative
Brad Witt

The House of Representatives considered two bills last week that may directly affect your family. SB 321A and SB 553A both deal with education, particularly those close-to-home issues surrounding age of attendance and discipline. The bills had already passed the Senate, but the debate was fairly robust when they reached the House floor. Here are the two bills and my take on them.

SB 321A decreases the compulsory school age from seven to six years of age. Current law requires children between the ages of seven and eighteen who have not completed the twelfth grade to regularly attend a public school full-time during the school term. There are, of course, exemptions for those attending private or parochial school, being home schooled, or are otherwise excluded as provided by law.

On the face of it, this would not seem to be controversial, but at the root of this is who is best able to make the decision as to when a child is ready to begin school full time. Most of us would agree that it is the parents. Factors such as maturity, physical development, emotional development or a host of other considerations may convince them that their child would benefit from another year at home, or in kindergarten. In order to act on those convictions, they would have to go through a process with the local school district that may or may not be successful depending on the outlook of the district.

My own experience, as well as anecdotal information from others, led me to vote against this bill. Most parents have only their children's

best interests at heart, and we need to support them and help make the transition from home to school as smooth and uneventful as possible. The future success of all concerned is at stake, especially our children.

The second bill, SB 553A, imposes limits on the instances when students in fifth grade or lower may be subjected to out-of-school suspension or expulsion from school. In the hearings on this bill, issues discussed included the history of discipline in Oregon, negative impacts to both the student and the parents, and concern for school staff and the resources available to deal with behavioral issues. Findings from six Oregon school districts in 2011-2012 indicate that approximately 6.4% of students were suspended or expelled from school, and that nearly 40% of those students received more than one suspension.

When children are disruptive in the classroom, our first inclination is to say that they should be removed, and it may be that removal from that environment is appropriate. But removal to what, and what is the long term plan for that child? My concern with SB 553A is that we are telling schools that they must not suspend or expel a child in this age group, but we are offering little else. We are asking teachers to become therapists in overcrowded classrooms with children who come to them with sometimes serious emotional problems.

To quote my colleague, Representative Jodi Hack, this bill puts the cart before the horse. If we want to make sure that children are not expelled or suspended, then we need to offer them the services that will help them to overcome the issues that cause them to disrupt. My vote against the bill reflected my concern that we are clamping down on the student, the teacher and the school without offering any alternatives that might lead to better outcomes for everyone.

PCC Columbia County Spring Update

Much is happening behind the scenes as PCC moves closer to selecting a site for the new educational center in Columbia County. Request for Information (RFI) advertisements were posted in the *St. Helens Chronicle* and in *The Oregonian*.

The College is looking for property that is approximately 15 to 20 acres in size, is relatively flat with good drainage and offers easy access to Highway 30. Street access and roads to the site must be in place. The site has to be zoned for an educational facility and offer reasonable proximity to retail services for students and staff. The new center will be between 4,000 and 5,000 square feet. The RFI provides a process for decision making and transparency for the general public and for the Columbia County community.

The new educational center is still on track to open in 2017. Anyone who has information about available property that meets the basic criteria is encouraged to contact realtor Jan Bottcher at jan.bottcher@cbre.com or 503-221-4809.

We have also received nominations for potential Columbia County Community Advisory Committee members and will meet with nominees during May and June. The selection of committee members is a critical piece in our Columbia County center development plan. We will share the final list with you as soon as possible.

Check out the summer courses in Columbia County at: <http://www.pcc.edu/about/locations/columbia-county/>

Historically, we have advertised our course offerings in the county on a term by term basis. Beginning this fall, we will announce our classes for the entire academic year. We can guarantee a class that draws appropriate enrollment levels. We cannot guarantee classes that fail to attract the basic enrollment requirement. The success of this approach requires that students, parents, educators, business owners and other stakeholders help PCC help Columbia County. We need your support to make this partnership viable.

City Department Updates *continued from page 6*

Parks

- Parks staff worked at Spencer Park clearing brush and removing temporary fencing and rotten poles that were used as the border around the playground area. Staff also removed dirt and debris. Parks staff removed temporary fencing along the Bridge Street side of the New Spencer Park in order to continue installing bollards and cable for the park.
- Initial clean-up of the lot near the New Health Center began. More improvements are projected in the near future.
- The faucet next to the primitive campground at the Lake was repaired.
- Together with City Administrator, staff attended the Parks Committee meeting. Several projects and problems were addressed. Among them were: cattails and water lilies (lily pads) removal and control at

the Lake, Anderson and Airport Park Hosts situation; New Spencer Park Restroom construction project.

- The Parks Department received appreciated help from the Boy Scouts (Eagle Project) in repairing some of the playground/play structures at the New Spencer Park. The Eagle Project (day 2) was a great success: Scouts repaired all the rotten/broken roof boards, and many of the roof supports. The supports for the straight slide were replaced since they were damaged due to standing water and rot.
- Mowing, weeding and regular maintenance is ongoing at all the parks.

City Recorder/Administration

- City Recorder assisted local Boy Scout Troop 860 in raising the large ceremony flags for the Memorial Day ceremony at Vernonia Memorial Cemetery. Also assisted

local Lions Club members and citizens with identifying veteran's plot, and placing crosses and flag in honor of American service members. A hearty thanks to all that helped with the Vernonia Memorial Cemetery Memorial Day ceremony; Aloha American Legion Post #104 Honor Guard, Boy Scout Troop #860, Vernonia Lions Club, Vernonia Freewheelers, and all citizens who volunteered. The ceremony was beautiful.

- At the May 18th City Council meeting the Vernonia City Council adopted Resolution 07-15 A Resolution Declaring the City of Vernonia's Concerns and Opposition to the Proposed Oregon LNG Project Liquid Natural Gas Pipeline. The City Recorder sent copies of the Adopted Resolution to Oregon Governor Kate Brown, US Senators Wyden

and Merkley, US Representative Suzanne Bonamici, Oregon State Senator Betsy Johnson, Oregon State Representative Brad Witt, and Columbia County Commissioners Tony Hyde, Henry Heimuller, and Earl Fisher.

City Administrator

- In collaboration with Human Resources Director, drafted job advertisement for the City Planner Position. The vacancy created by the resignation of Carole Connell, offered the opportunity to make a full assessment of our need in the planning/community development department. We are exploring all the possibilities to improve our capabilities, be more effective in discharging our responsibilities, and be more attentive and responsive to the community needs. We are

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VERNONIA'S WOMEN EMPOWERED GROUP

Damsel in Defense®

FREE self-defense event is coming to Vernonia

EVENT DATE: JUNE 13th TIME: 1-3pm

PLACE: Vernonia's Fire Station Conference Room (park in back)

Featuring affordable, legal to carry self-defense tools.
Be empowered to defend yourself in and out of the home.

Can't make event? Shop online at www.mydamselpro.net/lizpenney
(click link on homepage at top –Shop Online) next page
(click name Victoria Serorian) to right of name (click on Shop Now).
Proceeds will go to our Helping Hands Basket Program.
Contact: Victoria Serorian 503-429-0746 for further info.

FORM LB-1 NOTICE OF BUDGET HEARING			
A public meeting of the Vernonia Rural Fire Protection District will be held on June 9, 2015 at 6:30 pm at 555 E Bridge Street, Vernonia, Oregon. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2015 as approved by the Vernonia Rural Fire Protection District Budget Committee. A summary of the budget is presented below. A copy of the budget may be inspected or obtained at the Fire Station, between the hours of 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. Monday - Thursday. This budget is for an annual budget period. This budget was prepared on a basis of accounting that is the same as the preceding year.			
Contact: Earl Dean Smith Telephone: 503-429-8252 Email: firechief@vernoniarfpd.us			
FINANCIAL SUMMARY - RESOURCES			
TOTAL OF ALL FUNDS	Actual Amount 2013-2014	Adopted Budget This Year 2014-2015	Approved Budget Next Year 2015-2016
Beginning Fund Balance/Net Working Capital	277,977	259,200	252,211
Fees, Licenses, Permits, Fines, Assessments & Other Service Charges	990	750	750
Federal, State and all Other Grants, Gifts, Allocations and Donations	0	0	0
Revenue from Bonds and Other Debt	0	0	0
Interfund Transfers / Internal Service Reimbursements	3,676	0	29
All Other Resources Except Current Year Property Taxes	57,049	63,636	38,700
Current Year Property Taxes Estimated to be Received	174,544	180,000	181,000
Total Resources	514,544	493,486	472,690
FINANCIAL SUMMARY - REQUIREMENTS BY OBJECT CLASSIFICATION			
Personnel Services	124,350	130,804	130,480
Materials and Services	110,714	161,996	119,375
Capital Outlay	9,003	17,650	21,550
Debt Service	9,336	9,336	19,336
Interfund Transfers	3,676	0	29
Contingencies	0	0	3,000
Special Payments	0	0	0
Unappropriated Ending Balance and Reserved for Future Expenditure	171,176	183,700	178,940
Total Requirements	428,255	493,486	472,690
PROPERTY TAX LEVIES			
	Rate or Amount Imposed 2013-2014	Rate or Amount Imposed This Year 2014-2015	Rate or Amount Approved Next Year 2015-2016
Permanent Rate Levy (rate limit 0.9535 per \$1,000)	\$0.9535 per \$1,000	\$0.9535 per \$1,000	\$0.9535 per \$1,000
Local Option Levy	0	0	0
Levy For General Obligation Bonds	0	0	0
STATEMENT OF INDEBTEDNESS			
LONG TERM DEBT	Estimated Debt Outstanding on July 1,	Estimated Debt Authorized, But Not Incurred on July 1	
General Obligation Bonds	\$0		
Other Bonds	\$0		
Other Borrowings	\$19,336		
Total	\$19,336		