

School District Looks to Make Budget Cuts

District receives two year forbearance on two loans to delay \$190K in payments

\$190,476 in payments this budget year.

The Vernonia School District staff made several cuts from the prior year in the 2016-17 budget they presented to the Budget Committee at their meeting on May 12, 2016.

Superintendent and Budget Officer Aaron Miller presented the budget along with the Budget Message to the Budget Committee, and told them that, due to continued fluctuations in enrollment and the need to pay ongoing debt service from the General Fund, several teaching positions would be cut in the upcoming year.

The Budget Committee includes the seven person School Board, along with seven community members. There are currently three vacant community member seats. Current community members serving on the Budget Committee are Don Shulte, Maria Lemay, Angie Handegard and Tobie Finzel.

At the start of the meeting School Board Chairman Brett Costley was elected Budget Committee Chair and Shulte was elected Vice Chair.

Miller, along with Business Manager Dawn Plewes, explained the proposed cuts along with a plan to delay, for two years, the payments on two "Cool School Loans" the District received to complete construction of the new school campus. The two loans, taken in 2012 and 2013, originally totaled over \$2.3 million. The School Board later approved the forbearance agreements on those loans in their regular meeting, saving the School District

As of June 30, 2016, the Vernonia School District's total debt will be \$4,740,714, of which almost \$650,000 is remaining from the construction of the old middle school which was demolished following the 2007 flood. The balance comes from debt incurred for construction of the new K-12 campus. Even after delaying payments on the two loans the District will still have to make debt payments of \$317,530 next year. Over the past several years those debt payments have been covered by various fundraising efforts.

Miller told the Board that delaying the payments on the two "Cool School Loans" would allow the District time to continue considering options to retire the construction debt, including a new bond measure, and help Vernonia get back to, "being a normal school district," as Miller explained it. Miller later told the School Board during their regular meeting that he has tentatively scheduled a Town Hall meeting with the community on Thursday, June 2, 2016 to discuss a potential bond measure and answer questions.

In order to present a balanced budget and make those debt service payments Miller told the Budget Committee that all Prescribed Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA) and step increases in their collective bargaining and other agreements with employees would be frozen for the 2016-17 school year.

Miller also told the Board three teaching positions would be eliminated. One of four special education positions and a teacher coaching position will be eliminated. In addition, two elementary teachers are retiring at the end of this

school year; the District will only replace one of those positions.

While the General Fund budget includes an increase in State School Fund revenues of \$64,846 over last year, Miller told the Budget Committee that last year the District estimated enrollment would increase to 569 students but current enrollment is only at 555. In this upcoming budget Miller said the District was decreasing their projected enrollment to 531, noting "Our recent projections for modest growth have not materialized on a consistent basis."

Miller told the Board an increase of \$10,000 in the maintenance line item for the Mist School was needed to replace the roof. He also noted that the General Fund includes a contingency fund and an unappropriated ending fund balance totaling \$96,000 or just 1.5% of the General Fund budget; Miller said ideally those funds should be at 5% of the General Fund.

"While this budget does not meet all of the current needs of the students and staff in the Vernonia School District, it does fulfill our fiscal responsibility of providing a balanced operational budget, and continues to meet the state's minimum instructional hour guidelines," said Miller in his written Budget Message.

While Miller had hoped the Budget Committee would approve a recommended budget at the meeting, the Committee scheduled another meeting for Thursday, May 19 at 6:00 pm. A final Public Hearing is scheduled for June 9, 2016, where the School Board is expected to adopt the final budget as approved by the Budget Committee.

VERNONIA'S
voice
reflecting the spirit of our community
Publisher and Managing Editor
Scott Laird
503-367-0098
scott@vernoniasvoice.com

Contributors

Chip Bubl
Tobie Finzel
Karen Kain
Aaron Miller
Karen Miller
Shannon Romtvedt

Photography

Karen Kain
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

Where do you read the Voice?
Show us where you have traveled.
Submit your photo by email to:
scott@vernoniasvoice.com

School Board Considers Proposal to Sponsor Oregon Virtual Education

The Vernonia School Board heard a proposal by Paul Peterson from the Northwest Regional Education Service District (NWRES) at their May 12, 2016 meeting. Peterson asked the Vernonia School District (VSD) to become the statewide sponsor of Oregon Virtual Education (ORVED), an online learning service operated by the state.

According to the proposal presented by Peterson, ORVED's mission is "...to help personalize the educational experience for every student," and "...provide a hybrid program in which students take courses online yet still have access to courses and programs available from the traditional public school serving the student's residence."

Peterson told the Board that the Gaston

School District has been sponsoring the program but is planning to discontinue their sponsorship this year and that he is offering the VSD the opportunity to become the new sponsor.

As the sponsor, the program would provide the VSD with \$365 for each student enrolled throughout the state, plus \$15,000 in credit for Vernonia students to take classes through the program; in May of 2016 there were 55 students enrolled in ORVED. Peterson's proposal projects that ORVED will have 200 students enrolled by the 2019-20 school year.

Peterson told the Board that ORVED is a fully accredited, public virtual charter school which has been operating for several years, that provides online courses typically found in public schools. He told the Board

that, with the recent proliferation of online learning opportunities being offered by private corporations, the state has decided to also get into the market of online education to provide an alternative learning option for some students. The proposal states that all ORVED teachers are licensed and are either currently working in Oregon public schools, are retired, or are independent contractors.

ORVED currently offers a variety of courses in language arts, mathematics, science, social science, foreign languages, health and PE, and electives for both high school and middle school. All courses are Common Core State Standard Aligned.

Peterson told the Board there would be some

continued on page 7

All In
Pub & Eatery

FULL dish SPORTS PACKAGE!

Happy Hour Mon-Fri 4-7

LIVE MUSIC
Sat, June 11th
Triple Edge Band

- Specialty hamburgers
- 8 Draft beers & mixed drinks
- 5 Craft beers on tap
- Pool tables & satellite TV
- Free Wi-fi
- Beer & Kegs to go

"BIKER FRIENDLY"

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

Cedar Side Inn

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