

School Board Approves Bond Resolution

The Vernonia School Board approved a resolution at their July 14, 2016 meeting, that would submit a new bond measure on the November 8, 2016 election ballot. The School Board approved the bond measure language by a vote of 5-0.

Resolution 1617-01 will ask the voters in the Vernonia School District to approve a general obligation bond in the amount not to exceed \$6.8 million. The bonds would mature in 26 years with an estimated tax rate of approximately \$0.24 per \$1,000 of assessed value.

According to the Notice of Bond Election approved by the School Board, a major portion of the funds raised through the sale of the bonds would be used to pay off existing debt and there by free up resources for general operations. The current debt from school campus construction is approximately \$4.7 million.

If voters approve the bond the District will also receive up to \$2.7 million in matching funds from the Oregon School Capital Improvement Match program; if the District fails to pass the bond those funds would

be diverted to another school district.

If passed bond proceeds and matching grant funds are expected to fund the following additions to the Vernonia and Mist school campuses:

- four new classrooms, including a new art room
- a welding/metal shop building
- playground equipment at Mist and Vernonia Schools
- additional solar panels
- a football field, track, stadium, and parking facilities
- lights for the new baseball and softball fields on the campus
- a cross country/fitness/nature trail
- an indoor walking track in the large gymnasium
- repairs to the Mist School interior and exterior, including a roof, gutters, siding, gym floor, classrooms, and mechanical systems
- security/surveillance systems at Mist and Vernonia
- improved technology
- install a well and irrigation systems
- enhanced lighting systems,
- other site improvements, furnishings and equipment

Community Action Team: The First 50 Years

Part 4: Home Sweet Equity Leads to Real Equity

By Leanne Murray

When it comes to housing, Community Action Team (CAT) helps Columbia County residents in a multitude of ways. One very creative program called SHARP helps low-income families and individuals buy their first home. SHARP stands for Self-Help

Acquisition Rehabilitation Program, a program that is fairly rare in Oregon. Because it is funded through the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), Rural Development Department it is available only in small rural communities.

SHARP is unique because homeowners invest their own time, talents and energy into the house before they even move in; that's the sweat equity. The homes that qualify for the program need repairs or upgrades so the new owners provide at least 30 hours of labor each week until those projects are done. Over the course of what typically takes about three months, homes and lives are transformed in powerful ways.

In 2002 CAT introduced a different type of self-help program that helped people purchase and build new construction homes. It was a collaborative effort with multiple households involved that created a powerful sense of ownership and community pride. But with the housing market crash in 2008, CAT proposed programmatic changes to work with existing properties in need of rehabilitation rather than to build new ones.

By 2014, the amended self-help program now known as SHARP was up

Meet the Newest Vernonia Police Officers

The Vernonia Police Department has two new officers.

Officer Cody Pesio was sworn in to the Department in late 2015 and recently returned from Police Academy training after graduating on May 13.

Officer Eric Shafer is Vernonia's newest officer after just joining the Department in early July.

Officer Pesio is originally from Columbia County and served as a Reserve Officer for the City of Clatskanie for 18 months before joining the Vernonia Department as a full time officer.

Officer Shafer is from Washington County and served as a Reserve Officer with the City of North Plains for 18 months, then joined their department full time where he was employed for six months before becoming a member of the Vernonia Department. Officer Shafer graduated from Police Academy in March of 2016.

Officer Pesio is 26 years old and married. In his spare time he likes to hunt and fish and take part in other outdoor activities.

Officer Shafer is 23 years old and is engaged to be

married. In his free time he enjoys weight lifting, shooting, hiking, climbing and anything else outdoors.

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Officer Eric Shafer and Officer Cody Pesio

it's been a good experience so far." "I've been getting out and meeting people and having conversations with people," says Officer Shafer. "I think it's a really good atmosphere here and I like the bond with the community. I think this is going to be a really good community to work for."

Please join Vernonia's Voice in welcoming the two newest members of our Police Department to our community.



Jessica and Jason Smith earned sweat equity in their St. Helens home by participating in CAT's SHARP program.

and running. Since then, nine households have completed the program and several more are currently mid-project.

One of the first families to complete the process lives in St. Helens. Jason and Jessica Smith renovated a vacant house that had significant needs, but a lot of character. The Smiths have been in their home for almost a year now. During the process they worked hard to keep their existing obligations of full-time jobs and two young children while adding in a huge amount of extra work. The Smiths are quick to say they never dreamed they could own a home, much less one with so much room, a yard and a garage. They appreciate the opportunity SHARP afforded them; they couldn't have done it without it. Their investment also provided encouragement

to neighbors when they saw the terrific transformation. Everyone wins.

Once a household meets eligibility requirements and is approved by the USDA, CAT helps the potential homeowners find the property that best suits their needs. From there, CAT's construction supervisor helps identify and prioritize the necessary projects and the wish list projects, creating a scope of work. By considering the order in which projects need to be completed, they create a work calendar and jump in right away. Examples of repairs that are typically done include replacement of the roof, cabinetry, flooring, windows, and furnace. Other projects might include painting, deck repairs, and adding insulation. Some projects require the expertise of certified contractors like electricians or plumbers. However, the vast majority of the work is done by the new owners and their friends and family, with technical support and oversight provided by CAT's construction supervisor. CAT even loans them the larger tools like a table saw. According to Beverly Danner, CAT's Community Investment Director, the structure must have "good bones." In other words, it needs to be structurally sound enough so that the renovation

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