

School Board Approves Another Bond Attempt

District again selected in lottery and guaranteed matching funds

The Vernonia School Board voted to approve a second attempt to pass a bond measure at their January 26, 2017 meeting after being informed by Superintendent Aaron Miller that the Vernonia School District (VSD) once again holds the number one slot to receive matching funds through the state's Oregon School Capital Improvement Matching (OSCIM) program. That means the district is guaranteed funding from the state if District voters approve a bond measure.

The \$6.8 million bond measure will be placed on the May 16, 2017 election ballot and would be added to the existing \$13 million construction bond the community passed in 2011.

The bond will be the second time in less than a year the District has asked local voters to pass a bond measure. The funds would be used to retire construction debt from the new school campus, which cost a total of \$45 million, and would also include funding to complete parts of the campus that went unfinished in the original construction.

In November of 2016 Vernonia voters rejected Measure 5-259 by a slim margin of 1,034 no votes to 1,000 yes votes.

"The part of the bond that would have been used for improving facilities and grounds would have been matched," Miller told the School Board and audience. "In that defeat we as a community threw away about \$3 million."

According to the Oregon

Department of Education, communities in Oregon generally address school facility needs by passing local, voter-approved bonds. In many communities, getting the votes needed to pass these bonds has been a challenge, and state-wide, there is currently an estimated \$7.6 billion in deferred school maintenance costs.

The OSCIM program provides matching grants to support improvements to school facilities. The Oregon Legislature authorized the sale of state-backed general obligation bonds for this program that will provide about \$123 million to help stretch local dollars and address urgent school facility needs across the state in communities that pass general obligation bonds to improve their local school buildings. Districts were given three opportunities to apply for these matching funds in the general elections of May 2016, November 2016, and May 2017. This is the final opportunity for the Vernonia School District to receive matching funds under this program.

OSCIM funds are awarded to districts through two methods: a Priority List Process which prioritizes districts with low-assessed property value and higher rates of student poverty, and a Lottery Process which is designed to provide all districts with a chance to receive matching grants from the state. Vernonia was lucky enough to be chosen first in the Lottery out of 20 school districts for the second time in a row.

The new bond measure will request total funding of about \$6.8 million that will be used to retire the approximately \$4.5

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Injured Eagle Released Back into the Wild

Bird injured in Vernonia finally released after two years of rehabilitation

On Monday, January 23 in Longview, Washington's Gerhart Gardens Park a bald eagle was released into the wild.

The release of the eagle concluded a two year journey back to health for the eagle following a collision with a motor vehicle.

The injured bald eagle was taken to the Audubon Society's Wildlife Care Center in Portland for treatment after it was hit by a car driven by Nicole Larke just outside Vernonia. Larke's husband Eric, along with friend Matt Poetter, rescued the injured bird from a nearby creek following the collision.

In the collision, the eagle sustained a broken wing, which required surgery to repair. Audubon staff and volunteers at the Wildlife Care Center cared for the injured eagle through an extensive rehabilitation process in order to prepare it for release back into the wild.

"It was a cool experience to be there and see her release," said Nicole Larke.

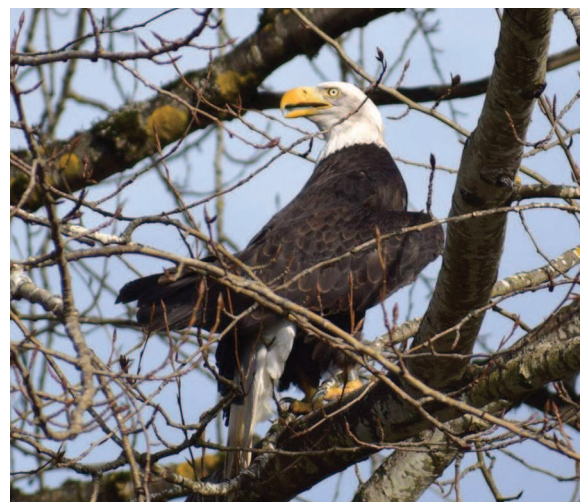
Eric Larke said he was disappointed that the Audubon Society decided to release the eagle in Washington, rather than return her to the Vernonia area. According to Eric Larke, Audubon officials told them that since it had been two years, her territory here had most likely been occupied by another bird.

"It is good she is back out there," said Larke.

Larke says he was told the release site was chosen because it was at the confluence of the Columbia and Cowlitz Rivers which is an important geographic marker for bald eagles and would help the eagle orient



Photos courtesy of Nicole Larke



herself, although it was later revealed that the location for the release was also chosen as part of a protest against a proposed methanol plant in Kalama, Washington.

On a sadder note, Eric Larke also mentioned that the vet that traveled to Vernonia to treat the eagle on the day it was injured, and continued with its initial care, Deb Schaefer, passed away from cancer last year and did not see her released back into the wild.

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VHS Seniors Present Projects

Vernonia High School 12th graders recently completed their Career Related Learning Experience, also known as the "Senior Project." This project is a requirement for graduation, and is one of the most interesting portions of their school experience.

This year the Senior Projects were presented on Thursday, January 19, following a delay for weather. The Senior Project requires students to submit a written Letter of Intent explaining the goals of their project, spending at least 20 hours of hands-on experience with a project mentor, creating a display board explaining their project, and then making an eight to ten minute presentation in front of a small panel of community judges, where the students explain what they learned during their project.

The purpose of the Senior Project is for students to demonstrate skills

they have learned throughout high school such as communicating, planning, following-through, working with others, meeting deadlines, working to set standards, and challenging themselves to learn new things.

Megan Ely – Megan job shadowed a clinical laboratory scientist to help discover the presence or absence of disease in the human body and then send the findings to doctors so they can develop treatment. Megan says a clinical laboratory scientist will test urine, blood, cancer cells, kidney functions, blood sugar levels,



Megan Ely

and everything in between. "They are the backbone of the hospital," says Megan. Megan worked with Jenny Glass

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