

Churches Helping Churches

Vernonia's Foursquare Church needs a new place to worship and Grace Family Fellowship has offered them space

Following the flood that devastated much of Vernonia in 2007, the Vernonia Assembly of God Church and Pastor Wayne Marr needed a place to hold their services while repairs were made to their building. Pastor Carl Pense and the congregation at the Vernonia Foursquare Church graciously opened their hearts and their doors to Pastor Marr and his group, and the two churches shared services for two years, while the needed repairs took place.

Ten years later, Pastor Pense and his Foursquare congregation are in need and another church in the community, Grace Family Fellowship, has stepped forward to help them.

The Foursquare Church building at 850 Madison Avenue is in need of some serious repairs. The post and beam foundation under the building is slowly collapsing and the building is sagging dramatically, which is causing the roof to bow as well. One step inside the door and you notice the slope towards the center of the building.

During a recent inspection in March by the Foursquare District Supervisor to discuss the needed repairs and the safety of the building, Pense was told that the repairs were too extensive and that his congregation would need to abandon the building and find a new place to worship. Pense was told he needed to find a new place to meet by Easter.

Pense says his congregation had begun discussing making repairs last year and had reached an agreement with Grace Family Fellowship to use their chapel as a temporary meeting place.

"They said, 'We can make the Chapel available to you,' so we had this on the back burner," explains Pense.

"They responded very quickly when they heard about our new need."



The Grace Chapel will be the new home of the Vernonia Foursquare Church.

The Grace Chapel, located at 358 A Street, is part of the expanded Grace Family Fellowship campus and was part of the purchase of two buildings from the Baptist Church that met there formerly. Grace Family Fellowship did some repairs and renovations on the building and have used it for bible study, weddings, baby showers, and other community needs.

Greg "Mac" McCallum, pastor at Grace Family Fellowship, says, "We are excited and happy to help. We always want to see what we can do, as our church family, to help the community. I always hope we can work together, because think of how much we can accomplish if all the churches worked together to promote the gospel and share God's love and show the community of Vernonia what God is like."

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School Bond Panel Answers Community Questions

The Vernonia School Bond Committee hosted a Town Hall Forum on Saturday, April 1, 2017 with a panel of local experts to answer questions about the upcoming School Bond Measure, which will be voted on in the May 16, 2017 election.

The new school campus. The Town Hall was moderated by *Vernonia's Voice* publisher Scott Laird.

The School Bond Committee is made up of local citizens and has used funds they raised to help educate the public about the need



With Measure 5-265 the Vernonia School District is asking for voters to approve a \$6.8 million dollar bond to pay off debt from the campus construction, complete the school campus, add facilities and technology, and do needed repairs and renovations to the Mist School. If passed, the District is guaranteed to receive \$2.35 million in state matching funds through an Oregon School Capital Improvement Matching Program (OSCIM) grant, bringing the total amount the District will receive to \$9.15 million.

The Bond would mature in 30 years with a tax rate increase of \$0.20 per thousand of assessed value.

The panel for the Town Hall included State Senator Betsy Johnson, Vernonia School District Superintendent Aaron Miller, current School Board Chair Brett Costley, and Jim Krahn who was the School Board Chair during construction of the

for the community to pass the bond through public meetings, meetings with specific groups, mailers, and other efforts. The Town Hall meeting was streamed live on Facebook and the video remains available at the "Vernonia School Bond Committee" Facebook page.

School Bond Committee Chair Sharon Bernal provided some background on the current need for a second bond and explained that in 2009 voters passed a \$13 million bond that helped jumpstart the District's efforts to move the school campus after it was damaged during the December 2007 flood. Bernal said the District faced a deadline of September 2012 to have students in the new school in order for the District to receive \$12 million from FEMA for a buyout of the old campus. Bernal said original estimates from bids prior to the start of construction were for the campus

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The Public Health Foundation Announces Changes at Vernonia Health Center

In a mailer sent to the Vernonia community, The Public Health Foundation of Columbia County (PHFCC) has announced changes to their service at the Vernonia Health Center.

In her letter, Public Health Administrator Sherrie Ford noted that discussions are underway for a new partner to operate the primary care services at the Vernonia Health Center, which have been provided by PHFCC since February, 2013.

The Vernonia Health Center is owned by the Vernonia Health Board who has a lease agreement with PHFCC to operate it and provide primary care services.

"We support the transition to a partner in health with years of experience in rural health care," stated Ford in her letter. "It is our expectation that this transition will provide Vernonia with a long-lasting resource in the community."

PHFCC's official last day will be August 5, 2017.

When asked what prompted the announcement that PHFCC would no longer be providing primary care service in Vernonia, Ford said they had heard unofficially through staff, patients, and colleagues that their lease agreement was not going to be renewed by the Health Board in the fall, but was unable to receive confirmation from the Health Board.

"One of our concerns was, if we were not given formal notice enough in advance, then we can't give the appropriate formal notice to our staff and our patients, and that is not the way we do business," said Ford. "Because we had heard from enough different sources that we felt were reliable, that a new partner was coming in the fall, we felt it was best to go ahead and set an end date so we can manage notification to staff and patients."

When asked for a response to

the letter from PHFCC, the Vernonia Health Board responded, "Since its inception in 1976, the goal of the Vernonia Health Center Board has been to bring professional, sustainable health-care to the Vernonia and Upper Nehalem Valley region without regard for patient income levels. We are in a new iteration of that process now. We are currently in discussions with a health-care organization that shares a similar commitment to providing quality, affordable healthcare with a focus on services within our community. Within the next 30 days, we anticipate being able to provide further details."

Ford says the plan is for PHFCC to continue to provide other public health services they offer to the community. "We borrow the space at the Health Center from the Health Board for WIC services," said Ford during a recent interview, "so we'll continue to pursue that option

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