

School Board Report

At the May 11, 2017 School Board Meeting:

Budget Committee Approves Budget – The Budget Committee met at the start of the School Board Meeting, with Chair Katie Cook presiding. The budget will now go to the School Board for adoption on June 8 and Chair Cook invited the public to attend that meeting and provide public input.

Project Based Learning Class Presents Grant Awards – The Project Based Learning Class, taught by Jim Krahn, presented grant awards to several community groups. The presenting students, Makenzie Fassold, Ben Shulte, Cassidy Whitton, Kaitlyn Eyrrick and Megan Ely, explained that the class received a \$5,000 grant from Community 101 which the class then had local non-profits apply for. The class interviewed each non-profit and then awarded five grants. Recipients included the Vernonia School District for a student painted mural, Hands On Art, the Vernonia Cares Food Bank, the Friends of the Vernonia Library, and the Vernonia Education Foundation to pay for guest speaker Phil Boyte who provided the workshop “Breaking Down the Barriers” during Unity Week. The students announced that Project Based Learning has received funding for two classes next year.

Board Approves Increases to Fee Schedule – The Board approved recommended changes to the District Fee Schedule, which follows State suggestions. The changes were all in the Food Services categories and include a 10 cent

increase for all meals for all schools and adults. There were no changes to Building, Sports, Non-Enrolled Student Tuition or Facility Fees.

Board Accepts Resignation – The Board accepted the resignation of elementary school secretary Ronda Lennen, who has served for 12 years. In her letter Lennen thanked Principal Aaron Miller, stating, “Your genuine concern for each of the students and employees has made this time a real joy. I am very grateful for all of your assistance along the way.”

Superintendent Report – Superintendent Aaron Miller updated the Board on the School Bond Committee’s work.

Miller informed the Board that interviews had been held with eight individuals to fill two open elementary school teaching positions, as well as for the open high school science teacher position. Miller said there were good candidates for all positions and hopes to have them filled shortly.

Miller said work continues by volunteers on the softball and baseball fields.

Miller reported District enrollment has dropped to 525.

County Responds to Students’ Letter – Superintendent Aaron Miller distributed a copy of a letter that was a response from the Columbia County Road Department to a letter sent by the Vernonia High School leadership class concerning an accident on Pebble Creek Road that involved three teens, two from Vernonia High School, and included the death of the other teen. The leadership

class letter was drafted by Kendra Stefan and signed by the entire class. The letter asked the county to address safety concerns on the road in the area of the accident.

Columbia County Public Works Director David Hill responded to the class with a detailed letter that expressed grief at the loss of life and stated that he will consider the issue with “absolute highest attention and sincerity.” Hill stated that while the County could certainly place reflectors and signs along the road, anything more substantial, like a guardrail, would need more review and funding would need to be found. Hill noted that a similar project involving a guardrail on Canaan Road cost over \$600,000. Hill said the State of Oregon is considering additional funding for road improvements and suggested VHS students might consider testifying at the Oregon Legislature in support of that funding.

Building Reports – High School Principal Nate Underwood provided a written report that noted that Blake Clark and Lauren Glass were named King and Queen of the Prom and also congratulated school Spelling Bee winners Kaitlyn Eyrrick and Isabelle Admire who finished first and second for the high school and Gabriella McAdams and Larissa Vandehey who finished first and second for the middle school. Superintendent Aaron Miller added that Eyrrick won the County Spelling Bee for the second year in a row, but will be unable to compete at the State event as she will be starting school at New York University; her spot at State will be filled by Admire, who finished second at the County competition.

Underwood’s written report also provided an update on the 8th grade Final Project, and noted that the 9th Annual Junior Salmon Auction will be held May 25.

Elementary school Principal Aaron Miller reported that 4th grader Bowen Cottini and 5th grader Zeb Burklund represented the school at the County Spelling Bee.

Miller told the Board about the upcoming Family STEAM night, which focuses on Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math, on Wednesday May 17.

Miller updated the Board on the Field Trip to Stub Stewart State Park, which he said was a success.

Miller told the Board Field Day

for VES would be on June 13.

Student Reports – Odessa Roberts from the high school leadership class updated the Board on high school activities, including spring sports, Unity Week, and a recent blood drive.

Freshman students participating in Advancement Via Individual Determination, (AVID) training reported on their progress. AVID is a college readiness program designed to help students develop the skills they need to be successful in college. Cloe Rylands, Dakota Willard, Abigail Coleman, and Sophia Wolf informed the Board about what the program involves, including study sessions, guest speakers who share their college experiences, Cornell Notes note taking skills, personal organization and the use planners, student tutors who assist with understanding, and a class field trip to the University of Oregon. The training for the program has come from a grant, which AVID District Coordinator Nate Underwood told the Board had been renewed. Later in the meeting Underwood requested, and the Board approved, travel to Denver, Colorado for five staff members for an additional three days of staff training, which AVID Site Coordinator Juliet Safier enthusiastically endorsed; the travel is paid for with grant funds. Teri Willard was the initial teacher and will continue with the class as sophomores next year, while Matt Blair will be added as a teacher for the new freshman class.

Board Recesses to Executive Session, Takes No Action – The Board Recessed to Executive Session under ORS 192.660(2)(i) “To review and evaluate the performance of the chief executive officer or any public officer, employee or staff member...” and under ORS 192.660(2)(b) “To consider the dismissal or disciplining of, or to hear complaints or charges brought against a public officer, employee, staff member or agent...” After returning to Regular Session the Board took no further action.

Vernonia School Board Meetings are held on the second Thursday of each month. The next School Board Meeting is scheduled for June 8 at 6:00 pm in the Schools Library.

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