

Schools Update: VSD Flood Recovery

By Superintendent Aaron Miller

Last month Vernonia School District (VSD) staff members were reflecting on the 11-year anniversary of our last major flood, and how far we have come since that tragic event. The generosity, outpouring of help, and well wishes was profound, with our students attending school in churches, city buildings, the Grange, and also being welcomed with open arms by the Scappoose School District. These were trying times, but times that required and allowed for development, compassion, and collaboration to grow and thrive.

Since that time the VSD has been in a constant state of recovery and trauma as it worked to move its buildings to higher ground and address the financial distress that came with the move. The support and caring of this community, and others who also came to the rescue, is still so very much appreciated!

While these issues were dealt with it, naturally and obviously, took time and effort away from our mission to “open the doors to endless possibilities” through educating our youth. While we are still not completely “recovered” we are moving ever forward. The debt incurred from moving our facilities has been paid, our new building is state of the art and something the whole community can be proud of, and we are putting the finishing touches on our facilities with the passage of the last Bond in May of 2017.

As these elements of recovery are placed behind us, we are ready to move on and more fully direct our energy and focus on what happens within the walls of our buildings, rather than on building the walls themselves. Bond projects from the May 2017 campaign are going smoothly and our campus is nearly complete. Facilities at Mist Grade School have been refurbished and maintained to provide long term stability, while athletic facilities and additional classroom space on the

new campus are scheduled to be fully operational by the beginning of the 2019-20 school year.

Recovery continues as does our focus on providing the best education possible for our students. We offer our sincere thanks for your support and cooperation in making this possible. Your patience as we have worked to get to this point while still tackling our day job - meeting the needs of our students - is appreciated.

On Wednesday, January 30 an update on Bond activities and expenditures will be presented at my next Superintendent/Community Chat from 6:00 - 7:00 pm in the Vernonia Schools Commons. I hope you can join me. In addition, another Superintendent/Community Chat will take place on Wednesday, February 27 from 12:00 - 1:00 pm at the La Cabaña Restaurant in downtown Vernonia. Thank you for your participation in these events as the District works to provide opportunities to maintain open communication and collaboration with the community and our patrons.

School Board Report

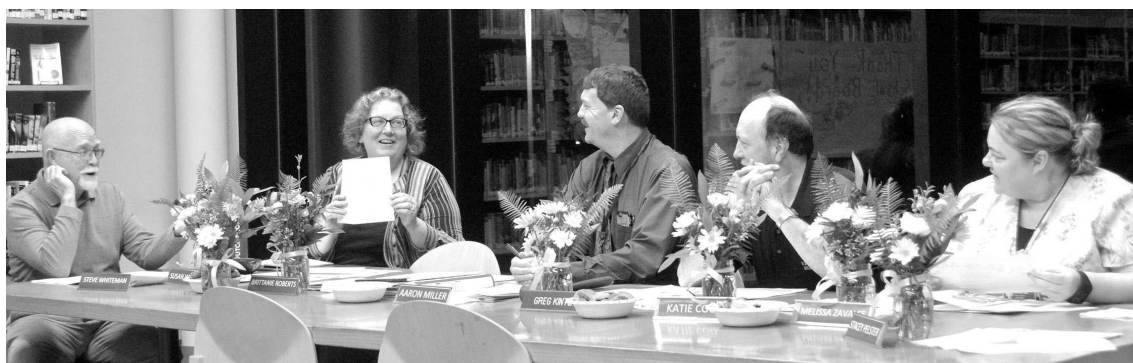
At the January 10, 2019 School Board Meeting:

School Board Positions up for Election in May – District Executive Secretary Barb Carr reminded the Board that four seats will be up for election on May 21 this year. Board members whose terms are up are Katie Cook, Brittanie Roberts, Board Chair Greg Kintz, and Steve Whiteman who was appointed to fill the seat vacated by Brett Costley. All will be four-year terms, except for Whiteman’s which is for two years to complete Costley’s term. Carr said candidates can declare for positions starting February 9 with a deadline of March 21.

District Looking for Budget Committee Members – Superintendent Aaron Miller reminded the Board and audience that the District will begin their budget process for fiscal year 2019-2020 in March and is looking for citizen members to be part of the Budget Committee. The Budget Committee is made up of the seven School Board members, plus seven citizen members. There are currently four open seats on the Budget Committee. Serving on the Committee is a great way to serve the community, get a better understanding of how the school operates, and is not a big commitment – the Committee usually only meets three or four times during the process.

Division 22 Standards Report – Superintendent Aaron Miller told the Board that the District is in compliance with all but one requirement on their annual Division 22 Standards report. The report is required of all Oregon Public schools and is designed to ensure Districts are meeting all Oregon Administrative Rules (OARs). The report includes items like diploma requirements, instructional hours, teacher and administration evaluations, and complaint policies. Miller said the District is not currently meeting the requirements of 45 minutes per day for physical education for middle school students, and will have to develop a plan to be in compliance for the next school year.

School Board Appreciation Month – Superintendent Aaron Miller opened the meeting by informing the audience that January is School Board Appreciation Month and thanking the School Board members for their service to the District and the community. The School Board



L-R: School Board members Steve Whiteman, Susan Wagner, Superintendent Aaron Miller, School Board members Greg Kintz, and Melissa Zavales.

members received gifts of flowers and cards made by 6th grade art students; posters and candy from staff and students also decorated the meeting room. Middle school students later presented the Board with candy during their Student Report.

Superintendent Report – Superintendent Aaron Miller told the Board he will be hosting a Community Chat event on January 30 at 6:00 pm in the Schools Commons to update the community on Bond Projects the District is working on.

Miller told the Board he would be meeting with adults interested in being part of the Hall Monitor volunteer program to go over training and expectations.

Miller updated the Board and interested audience members who were in attendance about progress on the At-Home School program. The program will register and provide assistance for home schooled students in the Vernonia School District and will hopefully be in place by fall 2019. Home school students have been working through the Colton School District. Miller said an application for the program is due to the Oregon Department of Education by May. He noted that in order to be successful the District will need 15 students to enroll and will initially serve students in grades K-8. He said he will meet with families interested in the program on Thursday, January 17.

Principal Reports – Vice Principal Michelle Eagleson updated the Board on the Elementary School, noting there was not much activity since there had been no school during the winter break. She said staff members stayed late after a professional development day in December to tie fleece blankets which were presented to six students during an assembly on December 19.

High School/Middle School Principal Nate Underwood missed the

meeting due to illness but provided a written report which recapped fall sports awards, noted the upcoming Senior Project Presentations, and discussed the temporary Food Support Program for middle school students and their families.

Student Reports – Torey Tolonen and Megan Zavales, representing the AVID class, updated the Board on academic activities in their school.

Public Comment – Scott Laird told the Board that Oregon School Board Association (OSBA) member boards voted to approve a voting seat for the Oregon School Board Members of Color Caucus as part of a proposed by-laws change. Each member school board was asked to vote on the change, with 76% of school boards voting in favor; the Vernonia School Board voted 4-2 against the proposal at their December meeting.

Vernonia Students of the Month

December 2018 Elementary School



Front Row - Leilan Borst (k), Zack Wheelock (k), Mael Schaefer (k), Sawyer Beattie (1)
Back Row - Archer Cutright (4), Summer Wheelock (4), Charlotte Schlegel (3), Konner Van Lom (5)

Cannon McLeod Grade 6

Cannon is known as a happy and energetic student who tries to make everyone’s day a little brighter, and always tries his best on his school work and tests. Cannon says his favorite subject is math. He plays the trumpet in the school band. In his spare time Cannon says he likes to ride his bike when the weather is nice.



Savannah Norman Grade 12

Savannah is the Vice President of the VHS Student Council and was the Homecoming Queen this year. Savannah spent her junior year as an exchange student in Munich, Germany. She is trying wrestling this year after taking stats in the past. She also works at Dairy Queen and babysits. She says her favorite subject in school is environmental science and she plans to study biology and environmental science at a four year university next year.

Sponsored by Senator Betsy Johnson