

Vernonia Schools Announce Distance Learning Plan for Start of 2020-21 School Year

School year will start September 21 and will feature no in-person learning for the first quarter

Vernonia School District Superintendent Aaron Miller presented the School Board with the District's Operation Plan for re-opening this fall under COVID restrictions. The District plan, which the Oregon Department of Education has required from all Districts, was provided to the Board at their August 13 meeting, and calls for all students to learn remotely with no in-class instruction for at least the first quarter of the school year, which ends in early November.

Miller said state metrics for COVID cases is driving the need to restrict on-site instruction. He said the District not only needs to meet those metrics for Columbia County, but also for Multnomah, Washington, and Clackamas counties because several instructors that work in the District live in those counties.

The Board approved a request from Miller to adjust the school year calendar, with the first day of school pushed back another week to September 21. Miller said instructors need more time to prepare for the Distance Learning model they will be teaching this year, and also provides a week for teachers to hold conferences with parents and students to prepare them for Distance Learning.

The District's re-opening plan includes the following:

- Chromebooks have been purchased for all students
- wireless hotspots, wifi, or satellite internet connections will be provided for families that need it
- daily meals will be provided for all students
- there will be limited on-site learning available for some students for evaluations, testing, and assistance if needed
- daily attendance will be taken
- grades will be given for course work
- special education will be provided
- the District has a hybrid learning plan in place which includes physical distancing and other needed measures for when on-site learning is allowed to begin again

Miller said, while some Oregon schools are allowing students to participate in athletic team practices, Columbia County does not meet the metrics to allow this at this time.

Miller said the District will attempt to remain flexible during the school year as they assess whether they are able to change the way instruction is delivered, but will wait until the end of the first quarter before re-evaluating their position.

Vernonia Cares Moves In to New Building!

The Vernonia Cares food pantry began operations in their new facility at 547 Weed Avenue on Tuesday, August 11.

It was a thrilling and historic moment when the first order of food rolled out the door, especially for Cares Executive Director Sandy Welch, who has been waiting 19 years for this day to arrive.

"Exciting! Exciting!" said Welch on the first day in the new building. "It's clean, it's new, and it's ours!"

Vernonia Cares formerly operated from the American Legion Hall, so having a building of their own is a new concept for Welch and her staff, and has been a long time coming. "My first official meeting as the Director of Vernonia Cares food pantry was about a new facility, and that was 19 years ago," said Welch. "So, that's how long I've been working on this, and it was in motion before I started."

The new facility is owned by the City of Vernonia, and will be leased to its two tenants, Vernonia Cares and the Vernonia Senior Center. The facility was built using \$2 million in federal Community Development Block Grant funds.

Vernonia Cares now has their own loading dock, which makes the chore of unloading



Cares Executive Director Sandy Welch pulling orders for clients in their new warehouse.

their freight deliveries much easier; at their old location freight was delivered to the sidewalk in front of the building and then moved by hand



Vernonia Cares now has their own loading dock. At the old location freight was delivered to the sidewalk in front of the building and then moved by hand truck up a ramp and into the warehouse.

truck up a ramp and into the warehouse. "We even have a pallet jack," added Welch with obvious delight; the pallet jack was donated by Vernonia City Councilman J.R. Allen.

The new facility has two large walk-in cooler units, one refrigerated and one a freezer. They also moved five freezer units from their old facility. Welch says they have new carts for moving food orders,

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The Timber Industry of Today Part 1 – Logging in Oregon

By Scott Laird

Oregon is home to some of the biggest and fastest growing trees anywhere, making logging and the timber industry a big part of the economy. Even after the shutdown of the Oregon-American Lumber Company, Vernonia still considers itself a logging town. In this 3 part series we take a look at the timber industry from a number of angles – what does logging look like today and how has it changed over the years; who owns Oregon's forestlands; how are Oregon's timberlands managed and regulated; and who benefits from the timber industry.

For over 30 years, from the early 1920s to the mid-1950s, the Oregon-American Lumber Company was the heart and soul of the Vernonia community. With high quality timber hold-

ings in the surrounding Nehalem River Valley and a large electric powered saw mill, Oregon-American employed hundreds of locals in their logging camps, on railroad and trucking crews, at the saw mill, and in their sales force.

The mill closed in 1957, but you can still see the historic remnants of Vernonia's milltown heyday, most notably at the old mill pond where logs were held before processing at the mill and the large concrete chip shed which was used to store sawdust for fuel.

The Oregon-American operation, or O-A as locals like to call it, turned Vernonia, originally settled by farmers, into a western boomtown. Before the mill started operations in 1924, Vernonia's population was minuscule – the 1920 census counted just 142 residents – but by 1930 that num-

ber had soared to 1,625, and Vernonia was considered the fastest growing town in Oregon. The census in 1960 following the mill's closure saw a drop of over 400 people from the previous count 10 years earlier.

O-A decided to operate a large saw mill in the backwoods of Vernonia because it was home to some of the largest and best old-growth Douglas fir timber found anywhere in the world, and O-A owned some of the best stands of it. Considered one of the largest lumber producers on the West coast, the O-A mill was capable of turning out 180 million board feet of lumber in a year when running at full capacity.

By the 1950s most of the old growth timber had been logged around the Vernonia region and the remaining
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