

Being an effective school board member requires a lot of work

With school board elections coming up in March and a full slate of candidates for most positions, here are some thoughts on what is involved in that position. Most of the following material is from *Becoming a Better Board Member, a Guide to Effective School Board Service*, a publication of the National School Boards Association.

A decision to run for school board requires an enormous commitment of time and energy to serve the community. Motivated by a desire to provide excellence and equity for all children, those seeking a board position are generally community leaders who are capable of understanding the tangible and intuitive aspects of issues which confront a system charged with the responsibility of educating all children to their fullest potential.

Communication and political skills are essential when working with individual members of the school community and public constituents. The individuals who make up a board must also have a high level of skill in working as members of a team. An understanding of the mechanics of group decision making (parliamentary procedure,

the function of committees, the ability to reach consensus) is necessary.

It is important for board members to be able to advocate for a minority view when voting and then openly and actively support the majority vote of the board in the community. All issues that come before the board must receive the full attention of each member and board members must educate themselves on the myriad of issues that come before the board. Board members must guide their actions by a sound ethical code of conduct of personal honesty, integrity, fairness and trust and ensure that they are not using their office for personal or partisan gain.

In a time of rapid social, economic, and technological change, the board's responsibility is greater than ever. The National School Boards Association (NSBA) has identified four key roles for local school boards; vision, structure, ac-

countability and advocacy. Adopting a shared vision to guide the school district into the future takes into account the context of the district within a diverse society and allows local control when establishing goals.

The school board is responsible for setting up the planning, policy and management structure that can move the district towards its vision. This includes employing a superintendent, adopting a vision and goals, formulating budgets, setting high standards for instruction and academic achievement, and encouraging an environment that rewards innovation and improvement.

Local school boards are directly accountable to the communities they serve and set up the system of accountability for their own districts. This includes assessment of student achievement, evaluation of staff, ensuring that all functions of the district work together harmoniously, and fulfilling the requirements of the state.

"The common school was to be free, financed by local and state government, controlled by lay boards of education, and mixing all social groups under one roof."

—Horace Mann
Educator
1796-1859

Board members must operate effectively with each other and know how to function when involved in actions concerning such diverse subjects as arbitration, special education, school lunch programs, grievances, distance learning,

district's needs. They must remember that public service is politics and that they are politicians.

Finally, school board members must serve as advocates, even cheer leaders, for their



emerging technologies, curriculum selection, prom locations, foreign exchange students, collective bargaining, communication with staff, students and community, and field trip policy. They must deal with budgets that don't meet the

district's vision, bringing together families and community to celebrate the schools' accomplishments, solve problems and sustain lasting improvement in the education of all students.

It's worth the effort.

Between the Bookends

By Nancy Burch, Librarian
Vernonia Public Library

The year 2001 has all the indications of being a banner year for the library. Circulation and library usage continue to increase and volunteers continue to be actively involved and supportive of library programs and projects. The Friends of the Library are busily working on a final draft of by-laws, after which a board of directors will be elected, and work on obtaining non-profit status will continue. New materials continue to be added to the library's collection. Some really nice donated materials are being added at the present time and a recent afternoon at Barnes & Noble resulted in some great new acquisitions.

Many of the newly donated books are Christian fiction and will be greatly appreciated by local readers. New purchases include *Devil's Claw*, J. A. Jance's latest Joanna Brady mystery; *L.A. Dead*, Stuart Wood's latest Stone Barrington adventure; and *Roses are Red*, James Patterson's latest Alex Cross thriller. Other new purchases include *Mercy Road* by Dalia Pagani and *Four Mothers* by Shifra Horn.

New acquisitions for youngsters include *The Tortoise and the Jackrabbit*, *Little Red Cowboy Hat* and *The Wolf is Coming*. If you aren't familiar with the tongue-in-cheek approach that has been given to many of the familiar fairy tales, be sure to look for one of these. Adults are finding as much or more enjoyment in them as are children.

Cataloging is progressing at a nice, steady rate. At present, 6,830 items have been catalogued so they may be searched and checked out electronically. The savings to date if these materials had been converted at the rate of .46 an item is \$3,141.80 or \$1,527.50 if minimum

wage had been paid for the 235 volunteer hours spent on the process. No words can express the gratitude felt for these dedicated volunteers.

Two of Oprah's Book Club novels have also been praised by local readers and, as thus, are on the "Reader Recommended" shelf. These are *The Pilot's Wife* by Anita Shreve and *House of Sand and Fog* by Andre Dubus III.

A big decrease in the number of overdue library materials from last month to this month has been noted. At present there are 58 items overdue, compared to last month's 145 items. Many phone calls and letters have been sent regarding this matter and, hopefully, patrons are well aware that fines are in effect for overdue materials and will continue the trend to return materials on time and thus avoid fines, extra work by staff and inconvenience to other library patrons.

Don't forget Orissa's after-school craft/story sessions on Monday afternoons at 3:30 on school days and keep in mind that the next meeting of the Friends of the Library will be February 13, at 1:00 p.m. at the library.

The success of the library is measured by how well it meets the needs of community members and by the positive involvement of its volunteers. With these thoughts in mind regarding the library, it certainly appears that success will be guaranteed for this new year.

Vernonia Library 701 Weed Avenue
Hours: Mon., Wed., Fri. 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
Tues., Thur. 2 p.m.-7 p.m.
Sat. 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
Preschool Story Time, Mondays, 10:30 a.m.
Phone: (503) 429-1818

Rural Oregon Day at the Oregon State Legislature



Rep. Betsy Johnson, left, and Columbia County Commissioner Rita Bernhard.

Rep. Betsy Johnson (D-Scappoose) met with local community leaders this week during Rural Oregon Day at the State Capitol.

"I think it's great that community and business leaders from throughout our state are taking the time to meet with legislators and explain the issues facing rural communities today," Johnson said. "Rural Oregon communities have unique qualities and unique challenges that sometimes the people up in Salem lose site of if we don't remind them."

Columbia County Commissioner Rita Bernhard was among those who went to Salem to participate in Rural Oregon Day activities and met

with Representative Johnson.

"Rep. Johnson has been very helpful in maintaining an open door policy so that our community leaders and state representation can work together on common goals," Bernhard said.

"I'm here to be the people's voice in the legislature, and hope that all constituents feel welcome to drop by my office any time they are in the Capitol," Johnson added.

First District Rep. Johnson represents Clatsop and Columbia Counties along Highway 30, and North Mist, Vernonia and South Mist are in the second house district and are represented by Elaine Hopson, D-Tillamook.

— NOTICE —

The INDEPENDENT is published on the first and third Wednesdays of each month. There are five Wednesdays in January, so there will be three weeks between this issue and the first issue in February.

Deadlines for the issue of February 7, 2001, will be February 2 for both news items and display advertising, and February 5 for classified ads.