

# Facilities Committee recommends replacing all existing buildings

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tween the engineers' report and questionnaire responses, it became clear that the committee's major focus would have to be student safety.

Numerous options were explored using a projected total student body of 950 students with 400 (currently 350) K-5 grade students; 250 (currently 204) 6-8 grade students; and 300 (currently 246) high school students.

Three separate facilities located close together within the community was viewed as the most advantageous way to meet the future needs of the district. Educational programming needs included providing space for student record keeping, health (nurse) rooms, conference rooms, an expanded library/media center, and enhanced science, music, art, shop, and athletic programs.

### Repairs would also require bond issue

After reviewing estimates for repairs that would be necessary to bring district buildings up to current code for electrical, mechanical and plumbing, and to provide for seismic (earthquake) safety, the committee found that the cost was nearly as much as would be re-

quired for new construction — without additional space, expanded educational program opportunities or improved athletic facilities.

the community. Faced with this problem they re-examined the basic assumptions.

Recognizing that sharing resources provides the most effi-

that a facility could be constructed with its major functions in a hub, and with surrounding "pods" that contained instructional areas for each grade level. With this type of design, the school campus could remain in the heart of Vernonia, a focus of community activity.

The preliminary budget presented by Soderstrom includes a large central facility containing a media center with class area, a commons/lobby, cafeteria/food preparation area, stage, band and choir rooms with practice rooms, wrestling area, technology classrooms, metals/mechanics shop and administration area. This facility would also house high school classroom space and a large gym. Connected to the central facility, and separated by it, would be instructional areas for grades K-5 and 6-8, each with their own smaller gyms and computer labs.

### Recommendations to school board

The committee's recommendations to the board includes the following elements:

- Utilize the current WGS/VHS property, do not purchase additional land.
- Replace the existing build-

ings with

1. A new 61,000 square foot core facility for the high school that allows for sharing functions, including a 10,000 sq. ft. gym, commons, cafeteria, stage and media center.

2. A new 19,000 square foot building for the middle school with an 8,000 square foot gym.

3. A new 24,000 square foot classroom building to be used for grades K - 5, including a 6,000 square foot gym.

• Phase out Lincoln and Mist schools.

• Liquidate all excess district real estate and use proceeds to offset bond costs.

• Place on the November, 2001, general election ballot a bond measure in the amount of \$14,900,000 to cover costs related to all new construction.

The innovative design concept accomplishes many objectives.

• Reserves the schools' place in the core of the community.

• Allows expansion of the district's practice of sharing staff between buildings.

• Creates cost savings over time with efficient energy use.

• Creates options for enhanced educational opportunities.

• Greatly improves athletic and extracurricular facilities.

• Accommodates future expansion.

### District has no outstanding debt

Information on bonding capacity was obtained from Seattle Northwest, a firm specializing in educational bond consulting. Current law allows the district to ask for up to 7.95 percent of real market value; that the Vernonia School District would be a maximum of \$29,742,000. The district has no bonded debt at this time.

The \$14,900,000 bond would require a property tax increase of about \$2.80 per thousand of assessed value, or \$280 for a property valued at \$100,000. In addition to construction and bond costs, the cost of furnishings is included in the total amount requested.

The committee's report is available in the district office for review.

## Aging schools built 1917 to 1950

The school facilities currently in use in the Vernonia School District are as follows:

**Mist Grade School**, 4,800 sq. ft., built in 1917 and remodeled in 1980. Mist Gym was also built in 1917.

**Lincoln Grade School**, 10,208 sq. ft., built in 1926. Modular classrooms, 1,680 sq. ft., installed in 1985.

**Washington Grade School**, 56,068 sq. ft., includes cafeteria/kitchen used by students from all sites (except Mist), built in 1930. Modular classrooms, 2,600 sq. ft., installed in 1996.

**Vernonia High School**, 40,950 sq. ft., and a shop building of 7,500 sq. ft, both built in 1950. Grandstand built in 1961, 3,000 sq. ft. Modular classrooms installed in 1996, 3,200 sq. ft.

The facilities committee recommended that district-owned property at Mist and Lincoln Schools be sold to help offset the cost of new construction. Mist School is situated on 3.08 acres near the intersection of Hwy. 47 and Hwy. 202. The Lincoln School site contains 2.63 acres in a residential area of Vernonia.

Repair costs for WGS were estimated at \$88 per square foot, and for the high school at \$50 per square foot or a total of \$5,590,000. The construction cost of new facilities was estimated at \$130 per square foot.

All options for building three separate facilities exceeded the amount the committee had agreed would be acceptable to

cient use of both facilities and finances, the committee recommended a cost-efficient design concept that would allow functions common to all students — libraries, cafeteria, administration, etc. — to be centralized, and would also support sound educational programming practices.

Soderstrom told the board

made at a prior meeting by Don Skinner, the board approved an exception to district policy that limits the number of exchange students to six. Six students have been approved for next year, and Skinner's request was to add a German girl who received a Congress-Bundestag Scholarship. This prestigious program was set up jointly by the United States and German governments following WWII. Woody Buxton, a Vernonia student, spent the 2000-2001 school year in Ger-

many with the program. He is the second Vernonia student selected for the program.

Over the last several months, the board has had several workshops on communications strategy in the district. This month they received a proposal for a communications audit conducted by the Oregon School Boards Association. The proposal includes three major functions: First, OSBA analyzes the district's current internal and external, formal and informal communications. Second, a series of focus groups is conducted to

determine priorities for improving communication. The final element would be the development of a comprehensive two-year communication plan for the district with recommendations for implementation. The board will consider the proposal at the July 12 meeting.

The board approved the 2001-2002 budget after making adjustments to confidential and supervisory employee salaries necessary to accommodate last-minute changes.

The next board meeting will be July 12 at 8:00 p.m. in the district office.

# Krahn sworn in to 47J Board, policy exception ok'd

The Vernonia School District Board of Directors had a full agenda at their June 28 special meeting, with budget adoption, long-range facilities plan (See page 1.), exchange student exception, and approval of administrative salaries. Also on the agenda was the swearing in of new directors, but only one of two new directors, Jim Krahn, took the oath of office. Rick Hobart, the other newly elected director, did not attend the meeting.

In response to a request

## Fire season rules are available from Fire district, Forestry offices

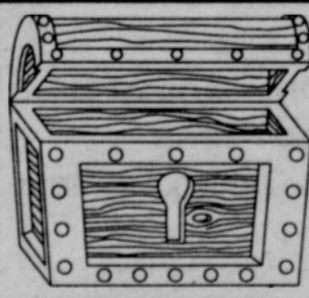
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Forest users may obtain information about forest lands in the local area and about public fire restrictions by calling the Columbia City office at 503-397-2636, or the Astoria office at 503-325-5451. Information is available 24 hours a day. Office hours are Monday through Sunday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. A recording provides information after office hours.

Rural fire protection districts in northwest Oregon coordinate their regulations with the state, once burn season is declared. For specific information, call the appropriate fire

district:

- Vernonia, 503-429-8252
- Mist-B'feld, 503-755-2710
- Tri-City, 503-324-6262
- Elsie-Vinemapple, Chief Mike Wammick, 503-755-2021



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