

Potential future cuts discussed in Vernonia budget committee

Three "levels" of cost cutting for the Vernonia School District, beyond what is in the recently approved budget, were developed by administrative staff at all levels, with input from their staffs. They are all undesirable, but they will serve as a starting point if the legislature fails to deal with the problem.

Hopefully, Superintendent Larry McClellan said, the district will have to make additional cuts to the proposed budget only at the first level proposed. This level represents a total reduction of \$45,000 that would include reducing the contingency and ending fund balances by \$10,000, selling surplus equipment worth approximately \$5,000, eliminating one in-service (teacher training) day for \$20,000, and eliminating all field trips, a \$10,000 reduction.

Level two, totaling \$135,000, would eliminate funding for junior high sports, for \$25,000. The programs (football, volleyball, boys and girls basketball and track) could be operated with volunteers and community funding.

Additional cuts at level two include reducing staff in the K-8 Media Center (\$15,000), replacing a certified librarian in the high school with an aide (\$15,000), eliminating a half time leadership team position (\$40,000) and two more in-service days (\$40,000). Any other alteration to the district calendar, such as a reduction in instructional days, becomes a contract issue with certified employees.

The final level of cuts presented by McClellan plunged the committee into depressed silence. McClellan said that these deep cuts would dramatically undermine the district's strengths and amount to "shooting yourself in the foot." First, a half-time position in grant writing and public/relations would be eliminated. Since \$800,000 of revenue included in the proposed budget is in the form of competitive grants, the impact of the loss of this position is obvious, and hardly seems worth the \$30,000 'savings'. Second, with old, high maintenance buildings

throughout the district, an additional half-time maintenance position would go. Currently the district has two full time maintenance workers and the approved budget reduces that by one-half.

The cuts at this level go on. McClellan said that the district would undoubtedly be joining districts across the state in writing to the Federal government because, with the elimination of

a full-time special education aide, the district would not be able to meet federal requirements. Level two cuts continue.

In this worst-case scenario of level three cuts, one full time teaching position would have to be eliminated from the district. The final element of this level would be elimination of high school wrestling.

Level three cuts total \$155,000. Combining level

one (\$45,000), level two (\$135,000) and level three the total reduction in district programs and services would be \$335,000. This represents a 12 percent reduction from the level of school funding today. According to McClellan the expected worst case, if the legislature takes no action to provide additional money for schools, would be a reduction of \$320,000.

Vernonia students take first in contests

Two Vernonia students took top honors in the Columbia County segment of the 26th annual Spelling Contest for the State of Oregon.

Columbia County will be represented by the following winners at the Oregon State Fair Competition on August 31:

Division I (Grades K-5) - Yolande Gendron-Herndon, Washington Grade School.

Division II (Grades 6-8) - Elizabeth Johnson, Rainier Middle School.

Division III (Grades 9-12) - Charles Gendron, Vernonia High School.

Also participating from Washington Grade School were Celia Gendron-Herndon, who placed second in Division I; Jessie Gehrke, who placed second in Division II, and Brittanie Roberts, who participated in Division II.

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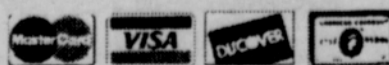
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