

Teacher wants more drug testing; principals cite budget needs

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healthy environment for children to attend compulsory education. Krahn explained that the state supports operating costs of school districts, but that capital expenses, i.e. buildings, have always been the responsibility of the community. Krahn said that state funds are simply not available for new buildings, which are historically and legally the responsibility of the local district.

Teacher wants return to increased drug testing

Cathy Ward, WGS teacher and Outdoor School advisor, reminded the board that, in the past, all athletes were tested for drugs at the beginning of the season, with random testing following throughout the season. Ward said she feels that it was beneficial for students to know that they would be tested. The district fought hard for the right to test athletes, all the way to the Supreme Court, and should not let up on the policy according to Ward. She would also like to have testing expanded to include all student activities, not just sports.

WGS Principal Kirk Sherrill and Vernonia High School Principal Mike Durbin responded that they had gone to a system of random testing of a percentage of athletes because of budget pressures. When Ward countered that athletes are required to "pay-to-play," it was explained that, though it may be a hardship for parents, the amount of revenue generated is very small. Junior high students have not yet been required to pay fees for athletic participation. VHS athletes paid slightly more than \$10,000 this past year, while athletic programs for the coming year are budgeted at nearly \$135,000.

Several years ago, Durbin said, when all students were tested at the beginning of a season, followed by random testing throughout the season, the program cost \$6-7,000 for the testing alone. The full program also requires considerable administrative time. Both principals told the board that, if a full testing program were reinstated, funds would have to be taken from other areas of the budget.

Parents angered by new non-resident policy

Superintendent Funderburg presented the board with a re-

vised policy, developed with Directors Carla Strand and Randy Hansen, on the admission on non-resident students. The policy applies to the transfer of students with addresses inside the Vernonia School District to other districts, and the transfer of students outside the district to Vernonia schools. The old policy allowed the board to accept or reject students based upon available space, resources, personnel, appropriate programs and a review of educational records. It did not accept students who were under expulsion from another district.

The revised policy retains the situations the board may consider when granting transfers, including students with unusual academic, behavioral or emotional needs, students living in remote areas and students whose parents are employed within the district. The revision also maintains the requirement for a written agreement with the affected school district, but the revised policy would allow the district to revoke the agreement at any time, for any "appropriate" reason.

The revised policy includes administrative rules and forms which meet the district's need for documentation. A parent who wishes to transfer a student to another district must complete a request form after June 1st for transfer the following academic year. The superintendent would then determine whether a student is eligible for transfer, under the guidelines set by the new policy. These guidelines establish that a maximum of four students be approved for transfer to any one school district, that a waiting list be developed when the maximum is reached, that the maximum can be increased on a 1:1 basis, and allow the maximum to be exceeded for special or unique circumstances. Funderburg also told the board that his decision could be appealed to a committee composed of two board members and the appropriate school administrator.

During the 2001-2002 school year, 18 students from the Vernonia district, primarily from outlying areas, attended the Jewell School District (composing more than 10 percent of the student body). Parents of these students were insistent in their refusal to send their children to Vernonia because they

felt the Jewell district offered better opportunities to their students. Several people, notably Win Carter, made lengthy comments about the superiority of the Jewell schools. The remote location was also mentioned as a reason to attend Jewell school, which is geographically closer to some residences in the Vernonia school district.

Particularly objectionable to these parents was the limitation to such a small number of students. Several families send all of their children to school in Jewell. Carter said that he was deeply concerned about separating families of students and that it would not be right to disrupt children's lives in this way. Other audience members insisted that the students, and families, currently enrolled in Jewell should be "grandfathered in" so that they could complete their education in Jewell. Board chair Carla Strand had to insist that the audience cease comment and allow the board to deliberate.

The board and administration listened courteously to audience comments, but had difficulty responding because of interruption. Hansen said that, while he understood the concerns of those living in remote locations, the district must set a hard line somewhere to limit the loss of state school funds. Director Leslie O'Leary proposed that, because school opens soon, the policy be adopted leaving the children currently in Jewell in place for one year.

Superintendent Mike Funderburg told the board that he had recently received information indicating that Vernonia may be able to retain state school funding for students attending school in Jewell. According to Funderburg, because the Jewell district is one of only two districts in the state that do not receive funds from the state, when students go from Vernonia to Jewell the money is simply not allocated by the state. He thinks it is possible to reach an agreement that would allow the students to attend Jewell, but receive the state school funds in Vernonia.

Finally, to a round of audience applause, Jim Krahn moved that the revised policy be approved with the provision that families with students currently attending the Jewell district may continue to attend school in Jewell and that the

superintendent pursue the possibility of retaining state school funds for those students. The motion was opposed by Cari Levenseller and Carla Strand but was approved with votes from Leslie O'Leary, Tim Titus, Jim Krahn and Randy Hansen. Darryl Hamblet was not able to attend the meeting.

Textbook adoptions are delayed

In other business the board:

- Delayed health (K-12) and science (K-8) textbook adop-

tions.

- Approved a new organizational chart for the district, outlining the primary duties of the administration, defining a chain of command for all employees to facilitate problem solving, and specifying safety as the duty of the maintenance supervisor. For the first time, students are included and, while student management is a duty of administrators, the chart makes clear that students also have a direct line to the superintendent.

Budget factors remain uncertain

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No members of the public attended the Budget Hearing in June, when the board adopted the budget as approved by the committee but took no action on the budget committee's recommendations regarding future cuts.

Board chair Carla Strand has told *The INDEPENDENT* she is recommending that the budget committee be reconvened. Elementary Principal Kirk Sherrill and high school Principal Mike Durbin said that discussions had begun on where to make cuts.

Two full time teachers resigned during the summer, potentially affecting the budget shortfall by nearly \$95,000 in combined wages and benefits. Whether they will be replaced, or whether the positions will be

left unfilled, will depend on numerous factors.

Governor John Kitzhaber has called the legislature back into session August 16, and made it clear that, if the legislature sustains his veto, he will call them back again in September to develop a revenue measure for a public vote in November.

Voters are already being asked to vote in September on a measure, referred by an earlier legislative session, on \$150 million to be taken from the education trust fund to support the state school fund. This is essentially the same measure as one defeated by the voters in May, but for a smaller amount. If the voters defeat the measure again in September, it will present another reduction for local districts.

LITTLE GUY FOOTBALL

REGISTRATION FOR 3RD - 6TH GRADES

AUGUST 17, 10 AM

VERNONIA HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD

\$75 per player / \$35 per add'l player same family

PUNT, PASS & KICK CONTEST

REGISTRATION 3RD - 6TH GRADES

AUGUST 17, 10 AM

VERNONIA HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD

\$5 per player

Questions? Call

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