

Budget-driven decisions often maddening to parents and kids

not be accurate. The original education funding level passed for the 2000-2003 fiscal biennium was \$5.2 billion — which school districts used to develop their budgets, but the state school fund has been reduced to \$4.7 billion.

According to Funderburg, at the time of the board meeting, the highest funding under discussion by the legislature for next biennium is \$4.59 billion. Therefore, though funding may be slightly more than the 1999 level of \$4.5 billion, local districts will have to meet increasing costs, due to inflation and contractual obligations, with even less money than they received this year.

Board chair Carla Strand told the audience that BAT has been looking at various scenarios to fund schools next year. Options for Mist School and all other district programs have been discussed. Directors Cari Levenseller and Darrell Hamblet, both BAT members, told the audience that no decisions have been made about next year's budget. Hamblet said the discussions have been about what programs can be saved, and have focused on what is best for kids. Strand told the audience that the proposals developed by the BAT will be presented at the first budget meeting, April 24, and invited members of the public to attend.

Sports Transportation

Richard Forster, parent of two high school students, expressed his concerns about the elimination of bus transportation for softball and baseball. He told the board that he, and many other parents, have serious concerns about their children's safety. Parents were most upset, Forster said, by the inadequate notice of the change. He said that the only information he was given was a form releasing the district from liability for students who provide their own transportation to games. A dialogue with the board began when Forster questioned whether or not all alternatives had been discussed.

Funderburg explained that the district saved \$12,000 by eliminating transportation for softball and baseball (Track and golf were already providing their own transportation.). According to Funderburg, the only

other option would have been to cut another school day. Audience members expressed frustration that students are asked to pay a sports participation fee and for uniforms and still are having programs cut from the budget. Board member Jim Krahn, after saying that no one supported sports programs more than he, responded that there just wasn't any money available.

Asked whether the district's transportation provider had been approached about alternatives, Funderburg and the board explained that the district is locked into a contract until January, 2004, and will look at alternatives at that time. He added that Curl's Transportation cooperates with the district on a variety of issues. Forster, and other audience members, asked whether using volunteer drivers, collection of an additional fee for continuing transportation or other options had been discussed. Funderburg said that he would pursue further negotiations and invited Forster to meet with him to discuss the budget.

Hamblet told the audience that, since 85 percent of the budget is used for contractual obligations, the remaining 15 percent has had to absorb all of the funding reduction. The community is going to have to raise money to save programs, Hamblet said, and he has not seen an organized effort to do so.

Student Reports

Mist Grade School (MGS) teacher Kari Hansen told the board that one the most excit-

ing areas of teaching primary students is watching the excitement of the emergent reader, when the letters and words on the page finally begin to make sense to the student. She introduced C.J. Hieronomous, a kindergarten student who has just learned to read, who read *Went Walking*, by Sue Williams.

Students from Mrs. Jones' 4-6 grade class, Meghan Hieronomous, Katie Wilson and

Bradley Worthington, reported on leadership activities, state reports and fundraising for Mad Science at MGS.

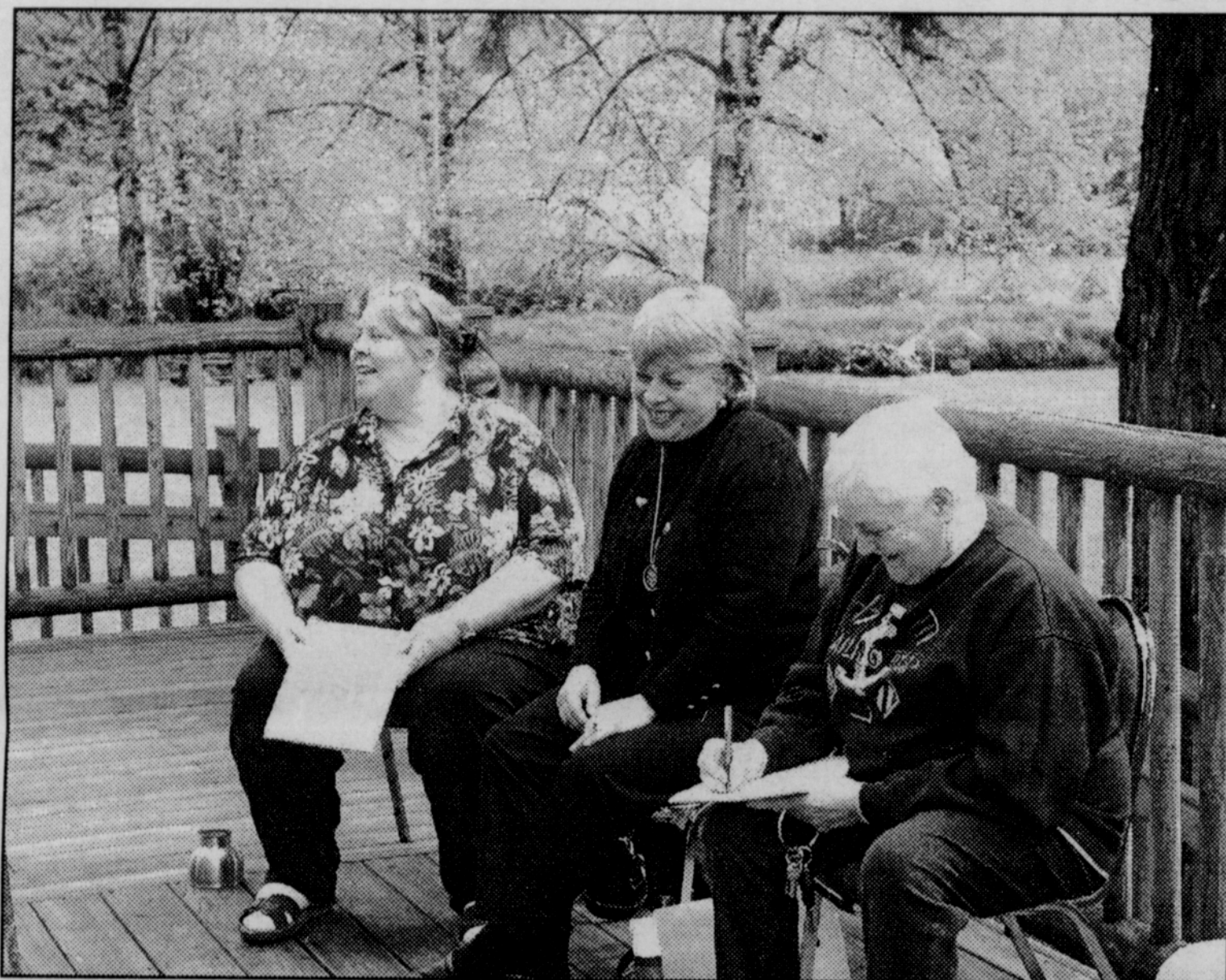
Sammy Purvee invited the board to the April 17th Vernonia High School Renaissance Assembly, when 96 students will be recognized for academic and attendance achievement. Spring sports are going well, she said, and the prom will be April 26th at the Shilo ballroom.

She also said that planning for Spring Fling was underway and that leadership class was looking forward to this activity.

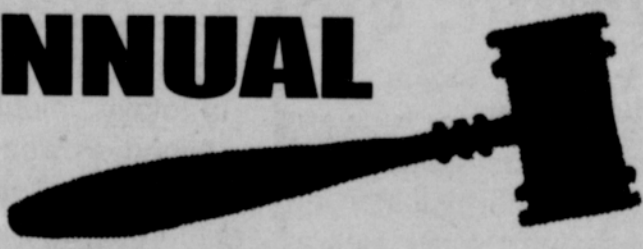
Fiscal Report

Deputy clerk Dawn Plews told the board that the budget summary presented to them every month now includes a new column that shows the amount of funds currently en-

Please see page 14



In spite of the grim economy, Mayor Cindy Ball, Sen. Joan Dukes and Doreen Richards found something to laugh about during Dukes visit to Vernonia April 12.



ANNUAL

MEETING TIME

SATURDAY, MAY 10, 2003, 2:00 P.M.

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