

Financial considerations dominate school board meeting at Mist

The Vernonia School board heard many comments from the, as usual, large crowd of Mist Grade School parents and community members who attended the October 23 board meeting in Mist. Carolyn White praised classroom aide Rena Titus and teacher Joanie Jones, telling the board they go above and beyond what was necessary and that she wanted to thank them in a public forum for their work. Shaney Fitzgerald told the board that having the school in the community was particularly beneficial for younger children. In response to a question from Joe Anderson, Superintendent Mike Funderburg told the audience that the budget process would begin again in January and that every program, including Mist School, would be considered, particularly if it is necessary to dramatically reduce the budget for next year (which is likely if the legislative tax package is overturned by voters in February). Anderson told the board that the school was a tremendous asset to the community and that this kind of small community America is "what the Pledge [of Allegiance] is all about."

Hamblet leaving district

Vice-chair Darrell Hamblet presided in the absence of chair Jim Krahn, who was unable to attend. With director Tim Titus also absent and a vacancy on the board because of Leslie O'Leary's resignation, the board barely met the four-member quorum requirement. In addition to Hamblet, the directors in attendance were Cari Levenseller, Randy Hansen and Ed Buckner. Hamblet announced that the November meeting would probably be his last, also, because he is moving out of district. Two applications had been received for O'Leary's position (Marion Johnston and Alice Traverso); they will be considered at the November meeting. Applications may be obtained at the district office and, at this time,

there is no deadline.

MGS teacher Joanie Jones told the board that she loves her new job, though, by undertaking the multi-age K-5 classroom, she felt like she was just graduating from college to enter the classroom for the first time. Jones told the board that her biggest fear was teaching beginning readers, since she had been working with fourth and fifth graders. Ann Kingsley, principal at MGS, that reading was a difficult and important task and that Jones was doing a great job. Jones introduced four of her first grade students, Avery Anderson, Logan Titus, Reed Jones and C.J. Hieronimus, who each read to the board from a poster about themselves, which they had written. All of these first graders knew complicated words including favorite, dessert, and Chinese. Jones told the board that she "couldn't do it without" her volunteers, about six people in the classroom every day.

VHS student report

Eric Schmidlin, high school student board representative, reported that Homecoming was a big success. He said that attitude had declined a little prior to Homecoming, but built back up with no more cussing in the halls. He also said that a few athletes were given study tables after progress reports but that they are working to correct their academic deficiencies.

Veteran's Day Holiday

The board approved a calendar change to recognize Veteran's Day on Tuesday, November 11. For several years the holiday has been celebrated on a Monday and, like several districts, Vernonia set the holiday on Monday. School will be in session as usual Monday, November 10th, and closed the following day for Veteran's Day Holiday.

Financial Report

Dawn Plews, district finance clerk, reported a smooth audit for last year. She also said that the district had also called in a food services auditor — a specialist in food service operations — to review that program. The food service committee (Plews, Funderburg and Krahn) will consider the auditor's report and develop recommendations for food service supervisor Gretchen Lindauer.

According to Plews, some of the property tax distribution that the school receives from the county may be withheld because of several large appeals, particularly that of Boise-Cascade. Columbia County Assessor Tom Linhares is proposing that the county withhold \$500,000 [from taxing districts in the county] of the 2003-2004 property tax collections and hold it in a reserve account. District revenue is reviewed annually by the state and adjustments are made based on all factors in the school funding formula to ensure that each district receives the amount determined by the formula. However, the adjustment payments are not made until the following fiscal year, so any funds the district would lose because of a change in local property tax revenue, would not be received until the 2004-2005 school year.

Gordon Heironimus asked about donations by the Mist community for support of the Mist school. Plews explained that all donations are tracked on a spreadsheet. After several comments about a "line item" for donations to Mist, Funderburg explained that donations go into a separate donation account and money received for a specific purpose, is used for that purpose. Funds donated to the student body are kept in the student body fund and expend-

ed at the direction of student groups, not by the district. The budget does not contain a line item for donations to specific schools. Money from donations is transferred to the general fund by board action at the end of the fiscal year. In an interview, Plews said after the meeting that the spreadsheets tracking donations had been forwarded to MGS. She also said the district had received \$1000 from the Mist-Birkenfeld Rural Fire District for textbooks, and that the money was used to offset the cost of textbooks for MGS.

Throughout the meeting speakers told the board that they were 100 percent behind Mist school. In response to several comments questioning his knowledge of individual donations, including a question from Tom Jones about last year's Partners in Education awards, Funderburg said that if Jones had specific criticisms, he needed to address those issues directly with him. Both Plews and Funderburg said that they do not have knowledge of every single donation ready at all times. Donations to the district are an ongoing process that is closely tracked throughout the year by all members of the administrative team, according to Plews.

Maintenance

Maintenance supervisor John Lewis told the board that the maintenance committee

needs to start meeting again to provide direction about future projects. The roof of the high school is "shot," he reported, and the gym roof definitely needs replacement. The committee will meet this month.

NCLB

Funderburg presented the board with a two-page synopsis of the No Child Left Behind proficiency standards and how they work. He also prepared a list of the NCLB Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) subgroups and a flowchart showing actions that must be taken by districts or schools after two consecutive years of failure to meet AYP goals. Funderburg also introduced the board to a set of belief statements developed by the administrative team, that would be used to apply the NCLB in Vernonia, if the board approves. The statements say that the district supports the philosophy that "no child should be left behind," that all students can learn, that authentic assessment and data analysis can measure school improvement and achievement, and that adequate yearly progress should be measured with criteria established within the school environment. The belief statement says that the school, staff and students are not "failures" and that improvements will occur by continuing to implement the district vision, guiding principles and building codes.

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