

Letters

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meeting date could be set.

The committee voted 10-2 passing the motion to move the proposed budget on to the board of education.

The budget is not adopted until the board of education votes to do so. The board of education can make changes within certain parameters as needed at any time on specific line items not the total budget dollars. By law the budget must be adopted before June 30 at a public hearing. The Vernonia public hearing for budget adoption is set for June 22, 2004. Everyone is encouraged to attend.

**Jim Krahn, Chairman
Vernonia School District
Board of Education**

Parental disinterest, lack of board opinion are both concerns

To the Editor:

I am a third generation Vernonian, parent of young children and a concerned community member. After attending some recent school board and budget committee meetings I have been disappointed by two main points. The first disappointment is the lack of community/parental involvement and attendance at these meetings. There are few community people in attendance and fewer that are willing to speak! Most of the time I can count on one hand how many community people there are in attendance. The second disappointment

is the lack of voices and opinions heard from the school board itself! If I didn't know better and didn't know some of the people on the board I would think they were without voice. I would think that Mike Funderburg and Jim Krahn were the only members with not only voices but opinions as well. I guess I should be grateful that at least two members are willing to speak. The problem for me is that I am in disagreement with much of what those two members have to say.

I would appreciate knowing where the other board members stand on important issues such as the potential of building a new school, closing Lincoln, having art classes taught to junior high students by a non qualified art teacher, putting

sixth grade students in the basement of WGS even though the board has been in agreement to close the basement due to health risks from mold and mildew as well as being at risk of another earthquake, keeping Mist school open with both a teacher and an aide, continuing with the current kindergarten schedule as well as allowing for such a large class of five year old students without the support of an aide for Mrs. Eagleson, etc. I really could go on, although I think you get my point. I want to hear the decision making process at work and have a sense as to what the other board members are thinking. I am not only interested in their approval or disapproval of a vote.

My hope is to encourage our community, especially parents to become more involved, and to find the time to attend school board meetings (held the second Thursday of each month at 6pm), to speak your mind about issues that you hold close to your heart and find important to the education of children. I also hope this letter challenges those of you on the school board to speak your mind and voice your opinions (assuming you have them) about important topics during the monthly school board meetings. You were chosen to be on the board because you proved to voters that you cared enough about our children and our schools that you would make sound decisions to benefit our community through our children and schools. I challenge you to prove your skills, abilities and love for the educational system.

**Amy Cieloha
Vernonia**

Wrong time, place for speaker's opinion

To the Editor:

This past Sunday I attended the graduation ceremony at Greenman Field. I was dismayed to see a lack of planning and organization to the event, but the reason I was there wasn't to see the grass nicely mowed or witness a more formal arrangement, it was to see the Class of 2004 graduate and hear my niece as well as the honor speakers. When the second co-valedictorian spoke, he

chose the wrong time and place to deliver his opinion of the school system, the voters and the administration. After reading his letter to the editor in the last issue of The Independent, I was prepared for a well written speech. I was sadly disappointed to hear his less than eloquent prose of "school sucks which prepares you for life which sucks." Life does not suck, it is a gift and it is our choice to make it whatever it is. I also feel that a serious lack of judgment and maturity was shown when the comments that were made disrespected not only the administration, but the community of voters as well as his own class. I have a child going into second grade and a child entering kindergarten next fall. Am I happy with the entire school system changing next year? No, I can tell you I am not; but a poorly written ballot measure with only limited effect is not the answer. In a democracy people do have a right to speak their opinions, and it takes left wings, right wings and people in the middle to balance us out. I ask Mister Flynn to use his obvious intelligence to make a difference and not just disrespect all those around him; it does not earn much respect in return. Those who give respect and have the respect of others make all the difference. I can make a difference by being as involved in our school system as I can be. I offer this plea to all parents and community members to stand together and offer more hope for our children in our schools and those in the future to come. I encourage you to be at the school board meetings to hear first hand what is happening, join the Booster Club to help support our sports programs or become members of the Community PTA. The more people involved the more say we have. Let us show young community members that even though differences of opinion exist we can still work together. It is my hope that amid adversity we can still make the Vernonia School District a better district to be in.

**Jennifer Glass
Honor Speaker
VHS Class of 1991
Vernonia**

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Valedictory speech receives both criticism and praise

The following is a draft of Valedictorian Carrick Flynn's 2004 VHS graduation speech, referred to in this issue of Letters.

You can tell it's my time to come up and give a speech because Mr. Scholl is poised to tackle me if I start to say something controversial. You can't slap a censored sticker on this all the time. Look, you can kinda see a vein sticking out. I would like to start off by thanking Judy Powell of the ACLU for coming out here today to witness my speech. Thank you.

Well I didn't come up here just to give the school administration a hard time, though that was what really sealed the deal. I normally hate giving speeches, but I do feel like I might actually have something to say.

First and foremost I would like to say that school is by no stretch of the imagination easy. It was not just the academics that made school difficult. Raging hormones, character conflicts, and renegade Pepsi trucks have all contributed to making this a bumpy road. In fact I would even dare to say that the schoolin' part of school was the easy part.

I am also not going to come up here and lie to you. School sucked. I think I would rather stick my tongue in an automated meat grinder than to ever repeat it again. That isn't to say that we didn't have some good times too, just to imply it. I think it was best said by the sticker Mr. Brookins had up on his chalkboard that read, "School prepares you for the real world, which also sucks."

I think school actually did in some ways prepare us for what we will face out in the real world. We can think of the bullying school administration as being like our horrible future bosses, and of the destructive voters that shot down measure 30 and starved the school of necessary funds, as being like other future voters who will shoot down other important measures and also starve the school of important funds. As much as I would like to continue to talk about these things, this soapbox is starting to get a little wobbly back here and Mr. Scholl is a pretty big guy. I think if he really does make a break for me I could

really get hurt. Not every single thing in school was bad though, every once in a while we got lucky.

The class of 2004 has been blessed in many ways. We have been lucky enough to have some of the greatest people I have ever known in my life, serve us as counselors and teachers. We had Mr. Victor, Mrs. Davidson, Mr. Nelson, Mr. Brown, Ms. Morlock, Mr. George Ray, Mrs. Rose, Mrs. Griffin, Mrs. Waddell, and of course, the second father to all of us, Mr. James Brookins. How we were ever lucky enough to get to know any of you, not to mention be your students, I will never know.

I really feel that it should be these people who helped to get us here, that hand us our diploma's, and not these phony figureheads who only muzzle the students and act as cogs in an obviously top-heavy school system. Well, I think I will take advantage of the surprising fact that the microphone is still on, and take a second to address my peers.

This is an incredible time of transition for all of us. We are now leaving the incubator and seeing how well our under-developed lungs, low birth weight, and malformed retinas are able to function in the real world. The only thing that could match the excitement of this day is its pure unbridled terror. This day, and more specifically this ceremony, marks our transition from children to adults (Fear Sound).

In the following years we will get to discover who the successful people will be out in the harsh realities of the real world. I personally believe it won't only be the obvious ones. I think that there are some of us, who have slipped through under the radar, that will go on to do great things; and I will be surprised and disappointed if at the ten year reunion, I don't see at least a few Ferraris in the parking lot. I know I myself have already started saving up money to rent one.

I would once again like to congratulate all of my class mates, and to thank everyone who helped to get us here. Congratulations Class of 2004! We made it!!!