

After more than a year of discussion, 47J will build new school

The biggest agenda item on the Vernonia School Board's November 18 meeting – a Request For Proposal (RFP) for contractors for the new school facility – was approved with little discussion, though not due to lack of input. The project has been discussed at nearly every meeting for more than a year. Board instructions specify a de-

sign that maximizes classroom and cafeteria space so students and staff will no longer be using the basement at Washington Grade School. Board chairman Jim Krahn thanked the board for the unanimous approval (with the exception of Ed Buckner, who was not at the meeting) and a sigh of relief went through the room.

Willamette ESD is serving as the "owner's representative" for the district and will evaluate the RFPs. The local board will then select a contractor. WESD is also handling the permit process. An application was filed November 12 with the city for a conditional use permit. The application addresses site modifications, location, design,

parking, appearance, and landscaping. The application will be reviewed by the city planning commission, and a public hearing will be held, probably in February.

The application describes a 16,000 sq. ft. building with a large cafeteria, classrooms and support space. The application clearly says, "It is the intent of the school to encourage public use of the cafeteria for off hours community events and meetings". Copies of the application are available at the district office.

According to the application, the primary reason for selecting the site between the existing high school and grade school, was that it "is in keeping with the concept of a community education campus". Five feet of fill will be required to bring the site up out of the flood plain and utilities will have to be moved, but the three large trees along

Bridge street will not be impacted. The only exception to the city's development code is a request to exceed a 100-foot span in an individual building on one lot.

The application says that Vernonia's Smart Development Ordinance was considered and the design "will eliminate the look of a pre-manufactured metal building." The covered street level entry will be flanked on either side by gable-ended brick, window and metal-faced building sections, with a complete span of almost 200 feet. Only turf, ground cover and shrubs will be planted under the existing trees. The building will sit 60 feet back from Bridge Street, and about 30 feet from the existing play structure. There will be about 40 feet between the new school and the high school. Access to the kitchen will be on a short drive

See page 20

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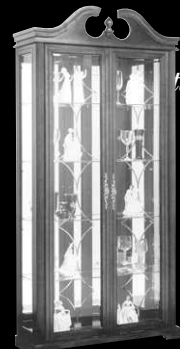
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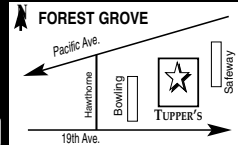
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