

47J board also hears Middle School update and changes to OSAA

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Closing the workshop, the board convened regular session and heard from finance clerk Dawn Plews that the district purchased the lunchroom finger scanner that had been returned last year after negative public response to the program. Plews said the scanner purchase was authorized by Superintendent Mike Funderburg last summer, but it can be returned again if the board chooses not to implement the program.

Board member Kim Wallace said the lines in the cafeteria are horrendous and that she had opposed the scanner the last time, but that something must be done about the lines. She also said she had not understood, previously, that students can "opt out" of participation. Wallace added that she'd like to go to a school that uses the system and see how it

works. The board will review this item at the next meeting.

Middle School update

In a report on the status of the Middle School, Bob Jensen of O'Brien Constructors said that work is almost complete on sealing the concrete floors. He explained that seams in the floors are there for expansion so the floors don't develop large cracks.

Vernonia City Administrator Robyn Bassett presented a list of five items that need to be addressed before the city will sign off on the project.

Items cited by Bassett include a requirement for additional parking spaces and installation of a paved 5-foot walkway to connect the street and the school. The school must also provide a map of utilities for approval, a landscaping plan needs to be submitted and approved by the city's planning department, and a re-

view of traffic flow needs to be completed with ODOT and the Planning Commission. An open house will be planned for the community after the building is complete.

OSAA changes

Athletic director Gordon Jarman told the board that the Oregon School Activities Association (OSAA) has recommended changing from four to six classifications to make things more even across the board. The recommendation would put Vernonia in 3A classification. The OSAA Board will vote on the recommendation at their October 24 meeting.

Policy review

Board Chair Randy Hansen said he would like the board to start reviewing a couple of district policies at each meeting. He asked the board to look at policies on complaint procedures with special consideration on how board members or

staff, who are also parents, should handle complaints. Board members were asked to bring suggestions for policy changes to the next meeting.

Another policy discussed was the supervisory termination process, which is not addressed. Hansen asked for a committee to look at options. Directors Wallace and Cari Levenseller, and principal Nathan Underwood volunteered.

Citizen request

A person identifying herself only as a member of "Vernonia Citizens" stood up during audience comments to tell the board that they request that Gretchen Lindauer be reinstated. Lindauer was the district's food service supervisor.

Bell schedule changes

Changes in the bell schedule were approved to reflect the times children are actually arriving at school, to reduce the

time difference between the schools' release times, and to provide up to 30 minutes additional class time per week. The new schedule calls for WGS to have first bell at 8:00 a.m. instead of the current 8:05 a.m. Tardies will still be marked from 8:15 a.m. The other change calls for students to be released on Fridays at 1:35 p.m. instead of 1:30 p.m.

Other business

The board unanimously approved the Consolidated Improvement Plan (CIP) as presented. The CIP is due in Salem on October 17.

Michelle Eagleson was unanimously approved as mentor to new K-5 teachers.

The next meeting of the board will be at 6:00 p.m. on October 19 for a public workshop on the superintendent search process. The next regular board meeting is scheduled for November 10 at 6:00 p.m.

More on property taxes and how they work, plus pay by November 15 for best value

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year due to an increase in the Scappoose School District's

bonded debt levies and the formation of the new Columbia Health District. The City of

Saint Helens was also affected by the Health District, but had a much smaller consolidated tax rate increase of 1.99 percent. Most tax bills for typical residential and commercial properties inside the City of Rainier will increase 2.54 percent.

A total of \$42,320,947 in property taxes is being billed for the county, cities, schools and special districts. That amount is 7.5 percent more than was billed last year. In addition, \$1,628,687 will be collected for such things as drainage districts assessments and the Oregon Department of Forestry's fire patrol special assessments.

County wide, the market value of all taxable property increased from \$3.81 billion to \$4.06 billion, an increase of 6.68 percent. The largest residential increase in market value, based on sales prior to January 1, 2005, was Scappoose,

where vacant land values increased by 16 percent and improved properties increased by 6 percent.

Commercial and Industrial property values in the rural areas of the county as well as in the cities of Rainier, Clatskanie and Vernonia increased 10 percent. Most of the remaining market values in the county increased by no more than 5 percent. Columbia County Assessor Sue Poling pointed out that property taxes are based on assessed values, not on real market values (RMV). The assessed value is the lower of real market value or the maximum assessed value.

Columbia County's total assessed value this year is \$3,259,470,631 or 5.43 percent higher than last year. The increase is a combination of the three percent increase in assessed value and new construction.

At least one third of the tax bill is due by November 15. Payments that are mailed need to be postmarked by the 15th. The second and third installments are due by February 15 and May 16, however the County does not send out statements for the February or May due dates.

Property owners who pay the entire amount due by November 15 will receive a three percent discount. If two thirds of the bill is paid by November 15, a two percent discount of that amount will be allowed.

Payments can be made at any branch of the St Helens Federal Community Credit Union, Wauna Federal Credit Union's Clatskanie, Vernonia and St. Helens branches, and Bank of the West in St Helens. Payment cannot be taken by the banks, if taxes are owing from previous years.

Property owners may appeal the value of their property. However, if the appeal results in a lower market value, there would be a reduction in the taxes due only if the market value falls below the assessed value. The deadline for filing an appeal is January 3, 2006. Appeal forms are available from the county clerk or county assessor's offices.



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