

47J board approves phone survey

The Vernonia School District 47J Board Meeting of June 5 started with Amy Donaldson telling the board that she had been dismissed as a school volunteer and asking to be reinstated. The board does not take action on issues raised during the public comment portion of the agenda, so no action was taken on this comment.

Ted Aubin was awarded an extra duty contract to be head coach for boys' basketball. Dan Utter was hired to teach high school social studies and was awarded an extra duty contract as head coach for girls' basketball. A contract was approved for Robert Izzett to teach middle and high school band and electives. The resignation of el-

ementary PE teacher Jeff Ridgeway was accepted.

New textbooks for art and music were adopted.

Oregon Realty was awarded a contract as listing agent to handle the sale of Lincoln Grade School and the surrounding property.

C. Keith Schaber and Associates was appointed as Project Manager for the high school roof upgrade. Schaber had consulted for the district and advised Interim Superintendent Al Davidian that the roof does not need replacement but does need flashing replaced and that a product can be applied that will extend the roof's life another 10 years for much less money than a new

roof.

The board approved (with Tim Titus abstaining) a phone survey of 30 questions that the Long Range Planning Committee recommended. This will give the board information on the views of the community towards a bond measure to fund construction of a new school to replace Washington Grade School, plus additions to the high school.

Davidian recommended to the board that classes continue at Mist Grade School through next year and that the board use next year to review future use of Mist Grade School.

In other business; the board approved twenty-three policy updates.

Right, Washington pygmy rabbit at Oregon Zoo – a success story.



Pygmy rabbits rebound at Oregon Zoo

In recent weeks, 17 Washington pygmy rabbits have been born at the Oregon Zoo, and another 50 are expected by the end of summer – a remarkable development in the story of a subspecies at the brink of extinction.

Just a few years ago, only 40 pygmy rabbits remained in the entire state of Washington. Now this critically endangered rabbit appears poised to make a comeback. This fall, the zoo, in conjunction with its conservation partners, will release pygmy rabbits back into the wild for the first time.

"This tiny rabbit is a big success story," says Tony Vecchio, zoo director. "Collaborating with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Washington State University and Northwest Trek, we've worked tirelessly to help save Washington's endangered pygmy rabbits from certain extinction. Releasing rabbits back into eastern Washington this fall is a monumental milestone."

Idaho pygmy rabbits arrived at the Oregon Zoo in December 2000. Zoo staff constructed be-

hind-the-scenes habitats full of loose soil, with tubes to serve as hiding places for the reclusive rabbits. They also constructed nest boxes fitted with infrared video cameras to monitor the rabbits' behavior. Using video recorders, scientists studied their activity patterns exhaustively, learning the subtle behavioral nuances of the smallest rabbit in North America.

In 2001, the research paid off, as the Oregon Zoo became the first zoo in the world to successfully breed Idaho pygmy rabbits. Thereafter, the zoo bred the rare Washington pygmy rabbit.

With breeding protocols established, the zoo shared its research with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). The protocols helped WDFW develop its pygmy rabbit breeding facility at Washington State University in Pullman.

"In the past, zoos have spread their conservation efforts all over the world, particularly in tropical areas," says Vecchio. "While these efforts have been extremely important, there has been a tendency to ignore our own backyards. At the Oregon Zoo, we feel that efforts in our own region will prove to be the most effective way to engage our visitors and constituents in conservation actions."

Today the Oregon Zoo is

home to two full-blooded Washington pygmy rabbits: Lolo, a male, and Bryn, a female. In collaboration with WDFW, the zoo has crossbred Washington rabbits with Idaho rabbits to help strengthen genetic diversity. The zoo hopes to maintain a bloodline of 75 percent Washington and 25 percent Idaho.

Pygmy rabbits are the only North American rabbits that dig burrows and reside in a sagebrush habitat. (Jackrabbits, which also reside in sagebrush communities, are actually hares, not rabbits.) In the wild, pygmy rabbits eat sagebrush almost exclusively in the winter; in the summer they eat a more varied diet. They have four litters of approximately two to six young during the spring and summer breeding seasons. Outside of captive breeding programs, their numbers have decreased steadily, primarily due to habitat loss through agricultural development and wildfires.

General admission is \$9.50 (12-64), seniors \$8 (65+), children \$6.50 (3-11), and children under 2 are free. The zoo is open 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. and is located just off Highway 26 and is also accessible by MAX light rail line. A parking fee of \$1 per car is also required. Additional information is available at www.oregonzoo.org or by calling 503-226-1561.



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