

“Vote Yes” committee provides information on 47J school bond

The following Questions and Answers are the first in a series of articles being produced by the Vernonia School Bond Committee, a group of your neighbors and friends working to make sure you have all the information you need to vote YES in November – YES for our children and grandchildren and YES for the future and prosperity of our entire community.

1. Why do we need a bond if we are getting stimulus money?

The two main reasons we need to pass a bond are:

- Insurance and FEMA funds are not enough to pay the total cost of repairing, replacing and bringing everything up to code that was destroyed in the flood.
- By passing a bond, Vernonians will show the government we are willing to invest in our community. And, that investment will make Vernonia eligible for more stimulus money that is awarded in the form of matching grants.

2. How does stimulus money come to Vernonia?

- It doesn't come in one big check. Stimulus money is paid as each project is approved. The Governor has identified Vernonia as one of three major projects statewide for stimulus funding. He will act as our “sponsor” when the city or school district applies for the funds. These stimulus grants will be aimed at specific projects for city and school renewal and energy saving opportunities.

3. How does stimulus money help the city and the schools?

- Stimulus money means Vernonians will only pay a fraction of the cost for city infrastructure improvements and new schools to replace facilities and systems that were damaged by the flood and are unhealthy and outdated. Without stimulus funds this community could not afford to pay that total cost. Taking advantage of the opportunity now, when the funds are available, will also make our town an example of how rural communities can not only survive but also get ahead of the curve and thrive.

4. How much is the bond and what will it cost me?

- The Vernonia School Board is considering a \$13 million bond that will pay the district's portion of the \$45 million needed to purchase property in a safe, convenient location and build our new schools. The new schools would be designed to house up to 1,000 students and last for 100 years. They also would be designed to save thousands of dollars annually in operating costs and would be in a location that would allow the district to buy insurance at an affordable rate.

The cost to property taxpayers for a \$13 million bond is currently estimated at approximately \$1.90 per \$1,000 of assessed value. The tax rate in the first year may be higher to cover up front costs that are similar to closing costs on a home mortgage. This means for every \$100,000 of your property's assessed value, the bond would cost you approximately \$190 more on your tax bill.

5. Why should I pass a school bond? What's in it for me?

- Passing a school bond will:
- Assure we get stimulus funds. For every dollar in tax funds we invest in school or city rebuilding projects, we will get \$2 to \$3 in stimulus funds. But stimulus funds are a one-shot deal and we have to act now to get them.
 - Keep Vernonia alive. Families with children are moving away. Unless the schools are rebuilt this exodus will continue.
 - Protect property values. New schools in Vernonia will help us maintain our town and increase our property values.
 - Maintain our economic base. The school district is our largest employer and many of the dollars earned by school employ-

ees stay in our community supporting our local businesses.

- Maintain our community and quality of life. By passing the bond and making sure we get maximum stimulus dollars, we can revitalize Vernonia and make improvements that will attract and keep our families and the business and services we all want and need.
- City rebuilding projects through stimulus funds may include a new sewer system and

bio electric fuel which will have a positive impact on all of us

6. We understand the site for the new schools is the “boot site” which includes Spencer Park. What happens to the ball fields we currently use at Spencer Park?

- Some of the current Bridge Street site will be made into community ball fields.

7. Where can I get more infor-

mation? How can I help?

- Visit the School district Website at www.vernonia.k12.or.us or www.vernoniaschools.org.
- Keep watching for articles in your local papers.
- Call the Vernonia School Bond Committee Chairperson Sharon Bernal @ 503-819-7924.

Brought to you by the “Vote Yes For Schools Measure” Vernonia School Bond Committee

Power of the People

By W. Marc Farmer, General Manager, West Oregon Electric Cooperative



Building Situation Update

There has been a lot of speculation and questions regarding the status of a new headquarters and warehouse facility for West

Oregon Electric Cooperative. I would like to take a few moments of your time to bring you up to date.

Last year we conducted a series of district meetings and a special insert in the Ruralite to explain our need for new facilities. The main needs being the fact that, in 1996, we had three feet of water in our building and in 2007, nearly four feet of water; the fact that an engineering firm we hired to determine the stability of our building pointed out that our 1956 building does not meet seismic code and may collapse during a seismic event; and the fact that we have outgrown our present buildings. We also conducted a member survey in which 12 percent of our membership responded. Of those who responded, 81 percent indicated they would be willing to pay at \$3 or less per month towards a new building. With this information the Board appointed a Building Committee to look at potential sites and a recommendation of where, when, or if we should proceed. An independent Commercial Realtor from outside the area was hired to investigate sites and make a recommendation

to the Board.

The fly in the ointment is the economy. The Board is well aware of the need for a new building, construction costs are down at this time, reducing the overall cost if we build now, and interest rates are down. We sit here at risk of another flood event, and work is needed to help the economy. The clock is also ticking on West Oregon receiving approximately \$745,000 in FEMA funding towards the new building.

These all being said, there are two factors weighing heavily on the minds of our Board; the ability of our members to pay an additional \$2.75 per month for a new building on top of a rate increase we will be hit with in October from BPA for our power supply, and the fact that we are close to our debt-to-equity ratio floor of 30 percent. The Board is being very cautious and careful in their deliberations, as it is our members that we represent and serve. If the economy was not in the state that it is, with unemployment at an all time high, we would most likely have already made the decision to proceed. We will be delaying any decision to build until the economy turns around and our members are better able to financially support this needed and necessary project. We appreciate the support and understanding our members have given us as we proceeded down this path. Thank you.

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