

Vernonia school board okays budget

The Vernonia School District Board meeting on June 10 started off with a budget hearing where Superintendent Ken Cox explained that a few changes were made to the budget approved by the budget committee because state revenue projections were reduced. The reduction totals \$301,000 for Vernonia, which was balanced by taking \$151,000 from the Capital Reserve fund, cutting staff days from 185 to 180, and student days from 171 to 170. Cuts in the number of days could save between \$90,000 and \$105,000. The numbers will be looked at closely, as the year progresses, to keep costs under control. The board unanimously approved the budget with the above changes.

Grade School Principal Aaron Miller showed the board a DVD put together by students

about the Positive Behavior Support program.

In new school updates, Project Manager Steve Effros reported that a NEPA (environmental) consultant has been chosen to meet with FEMA, and that agreements have been signed with the Oregon and U.S. Departments of Energy for the biomass boiler proposal that uses grant funds.

After an executive session, held to review and evaluate the performance of an officer or employee, the board stated that Cox has requested the district buy back 10 days of his unused vacation (rather than five). That would come to about \$1,700. Board members Cari Levenseller, Kim Wallace and Jim Krahn volunteered, and were approved to draft contract amendments on Cox's vacation days.

Board member Ernie Smith

asked the board to consider entrance and exit cameras for the school building next year, in light of a recent student disappearance at Skyline School in Portland. He also wants a review of the procedure for attendance phone calls, so grade school parents are called about absences before the parents of older children. Cox agreed to determine the cost of cameras and to discuss the phone call changes with staff.

The board also approved the Naming Recognition recommendation, which outlines what new schools donors could have named for them, based on amount donated and starting at the \$2,500 level.

The next regular board meeting will be held July 8, starting at 6:00 p.m., at the District office.

Six spell at County Spelling Bee

Six Vernonia students competed in the Columbia County Spelling Bee, on May 27, at the Northwest Regional Education Service District Center in St. Helens.

Two students per school district per grade level are allowed to participate. Vernonia students Anesto Torres and Kaitlyn Eyrrick went to the bee for the Kindergarten-Grade 5 level, while Dylan Taylor and Rowan Scott participated from the middle school, and the high school was represented by Souvanny Miller and Preston Roach. The same students represented Vernonia last year, said Grade School Principal Aaron Miller, and, "All were pretty excited to go this year

since three of them placed in 2009."

When the words were all said and spelled, Miller and Taylor had third place certificates for their respective levels while Eyrrick finished with a second place certificate. The other Vernonia spellers did well in their respective competitions without placing in the top three positions. Eyrrick's effort makes her the runner-up and, if anything prevents the first place winner from going to the State Spelling Bee, she would go to represent Columbia County.

The State Spelling Bee is held at the State Fair each year with the first place spellers from each county competing.

Many scholarships earned at VHS

The following 2010 Vernonia High School graduates received scholarships as listed:

Chance to Become Scholarship (\$5,000); Calie Johnston. Ford Family Foundation (\$1,000 minimum); Timothy Brown. Gene Weller Memorial (\$500); Bonnie Birkmaier. Hancock Forest Management (\$500); Calie Johnston. Holce Logging (\$2,000); Kathryn Stevens, Sarah Dupree. (\$1,200); Chelsea Patton, Katie Wilson. (\$1,000); Dy-

lan Vaughn, Bonnie Birkmaier, Kaitlyn Carr, Christopher Bamberg, Brandon Gilbertson.

Ida Loyd Walrod Memorial (\$1,000); Adrienne East. Kaiser Permanente (\$2,000); Dylan Vaughn. Karen Pitt-Kilgore Memorial (\$500); Timothy Brown. Kris Duane Crowston Memorial (\$750); Timothy Brown, Bonnie Birkmaier. Mike Busch Memorial (\$500); Dylan Vaughn. Oregon State Univ. Response scholarships, page 21

Get a bus pass for summer fun

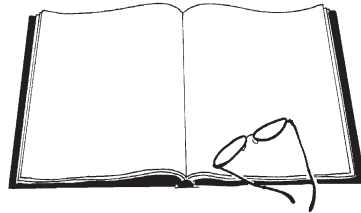
Columbia County Rider is offering "Summer Fun, Student Bus Passes" for students between the ages of six and 19 to be used between June 15 and September 7. Passes are \$30 and can be purchased on the buses with exact change. Students must show valid picture identification when purchasing and when using the pass. Students under age nine must be accompanied by an adult when using the bus.

The pass allows rides on all fixed and flex routes of Columbia County Rider.

Make a Splash-Read! at Library

Children aged 1 to 13 are invited to Make a Splash - Read! at the Vernonia Public Library's 2010 Summer Library Program starting June 22.

There will be a variety of programs, give-a-ways, and contests. Register at the Library and pick up a list of events. Children of all abilities are welcome.



Chalk Talk

Chalk Talk is a column of information about Vernonia schools. This column was provided by Superintendent Ken Cox.



Another school year has faded into the sunset, but in doing so represents a great deal of learning and achievement for our students. I had the opportunity of shaking the hands of 52 graduates from Vernonia High School on Saturday, June 5, and 40 eighth graders who became freshmen on June 9. My congratulations go to each of these students and their parents for helping them achieve these milestones in their lives. Life and learning continue in Vernonia, in spite of the mods.

When I first came to Vernonia I picked up on a phrase that represented an attitude among students. This wasn't pervasive, but I was surprised how often I heard it referred to, "What do you expect, I'm from Vernonia," often used almost as a put down. While I don't think that attitude is completely gone from our schools, I believe we have some evidence that it is fading. Case in point, it was pointed out at the Senior dessert that 85% of this year's graduating class are going on to some form of training next year, either college, trade school, or military service.

In addition, over \$57,000 in scholarships have been awarded to the Vernonia High School Class of 2010! These are just a couple of indicators that our students are proud of who they are and what they can become. They have an understanding of what will best help them in their future and plans on how to get there.

We are trying to do the same at the district level with regards to our new schools. We have a vision of what we need and want, a plan on how to get there, and we are executing that plan day by day. We have begun the process for selecting a general contractor for building the new schools and have some good companies competing for that opportunity. Their proposals will be due in early July and will include options on how we can build the new schools within our very tight budget. We have also hired a firm to conduct the environmental assessment necessary to complete our buy-out application to FEMA this summer. These - and progress on the philanthropic front - are examples of what is going on behind the scenes all the time as we steadily march up the road to our new schools.

Because of this steady progress there is no new or developing information that warrants a town hall meeting, so the one we were considering for June 22 has been postponed until late July or early August, when we will be able to give you a complete update on what is going on. In the meantime, please check out our website www.vernoniaschools.org. With the end of school and many meetings demanding my attention, I have not posted any online updates the last couple of weeks, but will begin a new series of updates this weekend.

On a final note, I hope you find time to make some memories this summer with your children or grandchildren. They won't necessarily remember or care what type of car you have, but they will remember an outing at the beach, a camping trip, or a hike when they got to spend time with you. We live in a beautiful corner of the world and I hope you take the time to enjoy it as a family.

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