

School board told pre-construction is underway

The Vernonia School Board met on November 4 and the board heard that there is now a construction trailer at the new school site and trees are being removed from the site in preparation for the December 2 groundbreaking ceremony.

New state graduation requirements in reading proficiency and mathematics will be going in effect soon. The board heard reports from High School Principal Nate Underwood on plans to meet the new reading test requirements. Underwood told the board that Assistant Principal James Brookins would address the mathematics portion at the next board meeting.

The board discussed the possibility of hiring a School Resource Officer (SRO). The City of Vernonia, Vernonia Prevention Coalition and the Vernonia Police Department proposed having the school hire

an SRO for the rest of this school year, then applying for a COPS grant to pay for an SRO for the next three years. The fourth year, the SRO cost would be paid by the district. The board approved the idea in general, but consensus was that there was no way to tell whether the district would have funds for the SRO salary for the fourth year. Superintendent Ken Cox will bring a more detailed proposal to the next meeting, since the board indicated interest in pursuing the idea.

The board authorized Cox to work out a Phase 2 – Site Work Addendum with P&C Construction. This is an addition to the existing contract, not a contract for new work.

Grade school principal Aaron Miller reported that the Natural Resources program committee teamed up with the Upper Nehalem Watershed

Council, applied for and got a \$1,500 grant from the Columbia County Small Woodlands Association. The grant will be used to buy a greenhouse, composters and gardening materials. These items will be used in a number of ways, including growing food for the food bank and cafeteria, and a native American plant identification garden.

In other business, the board:

- Approved three Oregon School Board Association (OSBA) resolutions having to do with standard OSBA operations;

- accepted the resignation of Dan Titus from the Budget Committee. Titus was hired as an assistant coach which meant he could no longer serve on this committee.

The next regular board meeting will be held December 9, starting at

Chalk Talk

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



Change is on its way! If you have been to Spencer Park in the last week you will have noticed that trees are already coming down as we get ready to clear the land for construction. We are still waiting on the final go-ahead from FEMA, the Army Corp of Engineers and the National Park Service, but those should be here within the week.

P&C Construction has a construction trailer on site and we had our first weekly (pre-)construction meeting on November 10th.

Our official groundbreaking will be held on Thursday, December 2, at 10 a.m. at the new site. We will have tents and umbrellas as well as many distinguished guests in attendance, including Governor Kulongoski. After the groundbreaking ceremony, the governor and others will spend a few moments with our students at the Washington Grade School gym. Everyone is invited to attend an Appreciation Reception beginning at 11:30 at the Vernonia High School gym. We want to thank everyone who has helped to turn our new schools from a possibility into reality.

Please join us in celebrating this momentous occasion!

Please note that, due to the ground breaking celebration, we will NOT be having the Town Hall that was previously scheduled for November 30th. And remember, if you have questions, please check out the latest at www.vernoniaschools.org or send me an email. I will respond.

“Hat Tricks” first performance tonight in St. Helens

ShoeString Community Players will present “Hat Tricks” in cooperation with Samuel French.

“Hat Tricks” is an exciting compilation of five scenes and three monologues designed for performance by mature actresses. Covering a range of women’s experiences in the second half of life, these eight pieces range from the purely comedic to those that combine humor with thoughtful and sometimes poignant explorations. This is a richly varied collection featuring a single intriguing commonality: Every scene or monologue includes the presence and compelling use of a hat!

Directing this comedy is Shannon Vaerewyck, who has been involved in ShoeString Community Players since its inception and is a charter member. The cast of women features seasoned actresses Joey Baker, Leslie Barker, Betty Fischer, Joan Heide, Kitty Heide, Sonia Lujan, and Patty Rismon.

Performances will be in the St. Helens High School Loo Wit Room, Building B. Show dates and times are Thursday, November 18 and Friday, Nov. 19 at 7:00 p.m. and Saturday, Nov.

20 at 2:00 and 7:00 p.m. Ticket prices are Adults \$8 and Seniors/Students \$6. This show is suggested for Mature Audiences Only. Tickets are on sale

at SunShine Pizza, The St. Helens Book Shop, online at www.sscpmusicals.com, and at the door.

OCF gives 50K for new schools

The Oregon Community Foundation (OCF) announced that a \$50,000 grant has been awarded to help with costs of a new K-12 campus in Vernonia.

“The Vernonia School District and our entire community are so pleased to receive this wonderful early support from one of Oregon’s leading philanthropic organizations,” said Dr. Kenneth Cox, Superintendent of the Vernonia School District, “It signals to the rest of the state that we are on the way to helping both rebuild our schools on high ground and be a catalyst for the future success of Vernonia.”

As a community foundation, OCF works with individuals, families and businesses to create charitable funds to support the community causes they care about.

OCF gave an additional \$218,000 in grants to the North Coast as part of more than \$7,360,000 in statewide grants. These included \$20,000 to a scholarship program of the Columbia Learning Center in St. Helens and \$7,000 to Rainier School District.

For a complete listing of grants, visit www.oregoncf.org.

Grant from Ford could bring \$1 million to Vernonia’s new schools

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additional donations for our project,” he concluded.

Vernonia’s schools have been deeply affected by the floods. Since the second flood in December, 2007, the approximately 600 students in the district have been using minimally repaired buildings and modular classrooms, all of them still located in the floodplain and vulnerable to another

flood. Vernonia is in the unprecedented position of having to rebuild an entire K-12 district all at once.

Voters in the small rural community overwhelmingly approved a \$13 million bond in November, 2009, to make a down payment toward the \$38 million cost to replace the three schools with a single K-12 campus.

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