



Vernonia Schools – Oregon Solutions Steering Committee
Scout Cabin, Vernonia
May 25, 2010 1-2:30pm
Minutes

Attendees: Glenn Ahrens, OSU Ext; Sharon Bernal, VEDC; Rita Bernhard, Columbia County Commissioner Dan Brown, Recovery; Dan L. Burton, visitor; Jim Coffee, Coastal Family Health Clinic; Eric Corliss, Red Cross; Dr. Ken Cox, VSD; John Donovan, Metropolitan Group; Steve Effros, Project Manager; Mark Ellsworth, Governor's Office; Earl Fisher, Columbia County Commissioner; Amy Grotta, OSU Extension; Bill Haack, Col-Pac EDD; Shelly Haack; Sally Harrison, Mayor of Vernonia; Tony Hyde, Columbia County Commissioner; Jamie Jones, PCC; Carolyn Keasey, Vernonia Health Board Chairman; Ralph Keasey, Vernonia Health Center Board; Alissa Keny-Guyer; Oregon Solutions; Jim Krahn, VSD School Board Chair; Kelly Marks, PCC; Steve Marx, Rep. Wu's office; Mary McArthur, Col-Pac EDD; Rebecca McGaugh, The Independent; Aaron Miller, VSD; Donna Nyberg, Rep. Brad Witt's office; Maggie Peyton, Upper Nehalem Watershed Council; Dawn Plews, VSD; Marc Siegel, US Sen. Merkley's office; Debbie Snook, Vernonia Health Board; Susan Wagner, Community Action Team; Bob Young, Vernonia City Administrator.

Introductions

Alissa Keny-Guyer opened the meeting with introductions on behalf of co-conveners Commissioner Tony Hyde and Tom Kelly, who could not attend.

Community Updates

Mayor Sally Harrison reported that the Schools Alumni Reunion planning for Aug 15th is going great. The Alumni Reunion Committee will be the Grand Marshall for the Jamboree parade on Aug 7th. A planning meeting will be held tomorrow night.

Bill Haack said the City received a transfer of 2+ acres of land from Oregon Parks and Recreation for the Rose Avenue project at no cost in return for keeping Anderson Park in tact. The city is expecting a statement from DEQ that no further action is required. The project is working with the health center, senior center and food bank, with room for one other project. In the rezoning process, the plan is for Rose Avenue to be mixed use with retail/commercial on first floor and residential on the upper floor. Bill is looking for funds for the road, site improvements and construction. He is seeking a special public works grant for street improvements, CDBG funds for food bank, foundations for the balance. Alissa

said that both the school district and the community are working on very parallel tracks based on responsible use of the resources.

Bob Young spoke to the wetlands mitigation; he is looking at sewer lagoons redesign and is issuing an RFQ for design/build and trying not to raise rates exorbitantly. Six acres of poplar trees would most likely take all of the effluent from the lagoons. We need to manage the 20 acres of trees in the city limits and 40 acres outside the city.

School Project Update

Steve Effros reported on the RFP process for a negotiated CMGC, a solicitation to general contractors who are qualified to bid on the project to come up with innovative ideas to help save money. By early September we will be in the process of selecting a final contractor to start construction in October. The contractors will be in on the staging of construction. Another (3 page) RFP went out for a larger environmental study related to the FEMA process. Three consultants have been prequalified and already have worked on the project. A Wetlands study is a subcomponent of the environmental study. Having considered several sites for the new wetlands, we are honing in on the mill site since it is closer to the school site, and are now looking at hydrology to design the new wetlands.

Dr. Ken Cox announced a Town Hall on June 22nd, 7-8:30pm, to keep the community updated on the rapidly evolving progress. Ken also mentioned the progress on developing natural resource training curriculum for staff as another way the District is focusing on improving education.

Economic Development Committee

Sharon Bernal said the economic development committee is getting its feet grounded after a year to get up and running. It voted in Marilyn Nicks as Secretary. She is part of the Chamber, the Downtown Association and Kiwanis. Sharon has just agreed to coordinate with Bob Young at the Columbia County Economic Development Committee as the Vernonia representative. The Vernonia committee has a couple of items they are working on to present to City Council, and they are working on parallel tracks with the school district project. It's very important to have a lot of voices and input from many people.

Natural Resource (& Community) Center

Aaron Miller, VSD Principal and natural resource curriculum director, reported on the many exciting possibilities discussed at NRC Committee meeting earlier today. Bob Parker of UO Community Services, assisted by a couple of UO students, will do a feasibility study to explore options for attracting programs and people to use the center. Teachers are busy wrapping up this year. Aaron attended a "No child left inside" meeting. There will be more stimulus money available through this program. There is an 11-person environmental education task force set by the Governor, with a report due Oct. 1. Oregon should receive a few million dollars towards the goal of environmental literacy. Tomorrow Aaron is meeting with Susan Sahnaw, Director of OSU's Oregon Natural Resources Program. They have a stewardship program and can provide us with free curriculum and staff to implement the curriculum.

On June 16-18, Aaron and four teachers will go to Tillamook for a four-day workshop geared towards helping educators understand state science standards. In July Aaron will go to a conference sponsored by Oregon Resources Institute on service learning focused on forestry.

Alissa explained the purpose of the NRC, and added that Oregon Solutions has agreed to support Stephanie Hallock, former Director of Oregon DEQ, to staff the NRC Committee. Stephanie has worked with higher ed on urban-rural partnerships to address the problem of rural high school students not going on to college. She has great connections in the natural resource and higher ed fields. She will be working during the summer with Bob Parker to help the NRC get more concrete with its plans.

Kelly (PCC) talked about doing community polling and surveys to ensure that program delivery meets the needs of the community - not just the K-12 perspective - and is not prescriptive. PCC is trying to combine distance learning with in-person learning in a hybrid model. The Upper Nehalem Watershed Council and the Health Clinic will also be doing a community survey, so the NRC Committee will combine its survey efforts with them. People who volunteered to help Kelly with the survey include Debbie Snook (Vernonia Health Center), Heather Lewis, Bill Haack, Maggie Peyton and Jesse Jones, with guidance from Bob Parker.

Private Sector Campaign Update

John Donovan reported on the successful corporate kickoff April 29th hosted by NW Natural with 32 business and institution leaders. Exciting developments have occurred since then. Von Summers of NW Natural and Ann Kilkenny have agreed to join our campaign; both have great networks. The Standard has agreed to be corporate supporter at the \$25,000 level. Foundation donations are in the works but take longer – you have to submit a proposal then wait months. A number of private timber entities are interested. We believe this is a story that will generate interest nationally.

Sharon asked at what point will this hit the media so that the general public will be know about it. John responded that we want to coordinate media with major exciting developments in the community campaign efforts, such as the August “biggest reunion ever” event which will seek support from alumni. While fundraising is not the highest priority for the reunion, we want alumni to recall great memories of growing up here and inspire them to respond to the plight of the town. Two TV stations will cover the reunion, plus other reporters that Sally has contacted. Alissa added that we are seeking a PSU student intern to help with fundraising.

Federal Update

Marc Siegel reported on a follow up meeting April 29th that several team members had with Vicki Walker following our last steering committee meeting to discuss how USDA can be involved. Vicki believes this project fits with their objectives and is committed to seeking USDA funds for this. Marc announced Senator Wyden’s town hall, June 6th, 5 p.m.

Ken Cox shared that we continue to get updates from Nora Khalil from Washington DC. Ken is revising last year's \$150,000 federal appropriations application, which was awarded but requires additional information before the money can be sent.

Dan Brown explained that the FEMA waiver process been approved, allowing us to seek more than the \$3.3 cap per disaster per community. Great news! The project also met the benefit cost analysis condition (BCA). With the environmental process proceeding at the same time as the application process, FEMA is letting us submit parts as we go for approval and feedback. Steve said we should complete the NEPA process by October 1. Sally mentioned that the city is looking to put up a message board at the end of town as you are coming in that can be seen from both ways. It will contain a schedule of events – can be used in case of emergencies.

State Update

Alissa reported on behalf of Mark Ellsworth about ongoing discussions with the Governor about an Executive Order and with state agencies about how they can support this project.

Next Steps

Upcoming dates: June 22 Town Hall, 7pm, VHS cafeteria; Aug 6-8 Jamboree; August 15 reunion; August 24 Oregon Solutions 1-2:30pm; September 9 Town Hall.

Alissa reported that the full steering committee meeting will not meet in June and July, and will switch to alternating months (rather than meeting monthly) starting in August. The District will hold Town Halls in the opposite alternating months, so that a public meeting will still be held monthly to keep everyone aware of rapidly evolving developments. The NRC and FEMA committees will continue to meet over the summer, as will public and private sector meetings.

Ken Cox expressed his appreciation to the phenomenal federal, state, county, city and private sector team that is working on our behalf of the schools.

Dan Burton from the audience spoke; he grew up in Vernonia and Ken Cox had invited him to this meeting. He commented on how impressed he was with the ideas, the energy and the effort that has gone into this project.

*Steering Committee meetings in Vernonia
Fourth Tuesday of alternate months, 1-2:30pm