



Vernonia Schools – Oregon Solutions Steering Committee
Scout Cabin, Vernonia
August 24, 2010, 1-2:30pm
Minutes

Attendance: Glenn Ahrens, OSU Extension; Sharon Bernal, VEDC; John Donovan, Metropolitan Group; Steve Effros, Aadland Evans Project Manager; Mark Ellsworth, Governor's Office; Alissa Keny-Guyer, Oregon Solutions; Amy Grotta, OSU Extension; Bill Haack, Interim City Administrator; Stephanie Hallock, Oregon Solutions; Sally Harrison, Mayor of Vernonia; Tony Hyde, Columbia County Commissioner; Jim Krahn, VSD School Board Chair; Scott Laird, Vernonia's Voice; Gayle Lee, IBEW Local 48; Betsy Miller, VSD; Dawn Plews, VSD; Marc Seigel, Sen. Merkley's office; Bruce Shoemaker, Actidyne Survey Research; Debbie Snook, Vernonia Health Center Board

Welcome and introductions by Oregon Solutions co-chair, Commissioner Tony Hyde

School Project Update

Steve Effros reported that the Evaluation Committee evaluated contractors; one of the four applicants met qualifications. The committee will work with P&C Construction Company to determine cost saving concepts. With a new wetland site selected, the FEMA NEPA review is scheduled to be completed by the late October or early November. More information will be presented at a Town Hall on Sept. 28. The construction contract will have been awarded at that time. The groundbreaking, tentatively set for late October, is driven by process and attendees and subject to change.

Private Sector Campaign Update

Sally reported that the Vernonia's Biggest Class reunion was a big success. Over 400 graduates attended and over \$5,000 was raised for the school project. Equally important, alumni who were attached to their old grade school had tours of the old and new site to understand the importance of moving the location. Thanks to the Vernonia Jamboree committee, to Tony Hyde and Mike Pihl who made chairs that were then raffled, and to Ken Cox, John Donovan and Alissa Keny-Guyer for manning a table with new school site information.

John Donovan commented that there was great media coverage in local papers and Oregonian about the event.

Gordon Smith has made a challenge to local business owners; he will give up to a \$10k match. Sharon Bernal donated \$500 to the challenge. Vernonia's Voice, Payroll Plus and Oregon Realty have also donated to the challenge.

John Donovan reported that Justin Delany of The Standard joined the campaign committee; he also chairs the Portland Business Alliance. Sho Dozono is an active campaign participant as are Von Summers of NW Natural Gas, and Ken Thrasher, CEO of Compli. The business community in Portland has rallied to the cause. Two cultivation events are planned for Sept. 20th and 30th for foundation and corporate leaders.

The Ford Family Foundation proposal is in motion; Catalyst campaign members will meet with TFFF in early September. There are grants pending with the Oregon Community Foundation, Marie Lamfrom, Murdock Foundation and Miller Foundation. We have been invited to present at the Grantmakers of Oregon and SW Washington (GOSW) biennial conference in Astoria in October. Tony Hyde will be aired for a Comcast "Newsmakers" cable news presentation.

John Donovan reported that \$15.4 million has been raised so far from bond and public and private support. There are \$15 million in requests pending and \$13 million in planned requests not yet formally submitted.

Tony Hyde reported that he has met with a person that does new market tax credit all over the country who believes we qualify for \$500k; he would donate his fee (pro bono) because he loves the project.

Mayor Shirlee Kalkhoven of Nehalem donated \$1,000 and made a challenge to every other city in Oregon to match it.

Federal Update

Marc Siegel announced that with the strong advocacy of Senators Merkley and Wyden, the Senate Energy Committee included a \$300,000 appropriation for the school energy efficient and sustainability features in its energy and water appropriations bill. This is one of only 4 such appropriations in Oregon that passed this round. Next the bill must pass the full senate, be merged with the House and get signed by the President. Tony Hyde suggested sending a letter of thanks to Senators Merkley and Wyden.

FEMA application

Dan Brown announced preliminary approval from Region 10 FEMA on the FMA buy-out of the old school site. They have been meeting to determine what percent and what additional project costs (like the environmental studies, some of Steve Effros's time, etc.) they can support, and the

total reimbursement may be higher than originally projected. The FEMA application is moving forward and we should know a lot more next month.

U.S. Department of Transportation

Steve Effros reported on meetings with the City of Vernonia and the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) regarding the road component: Hwy 47 and Missouri Street improvements. David Kim, head of ODOT for the region encompassing Vernonia, contacted VSD offering to help with this project. The pre-application deadline for Tiger II federal transportation funds was submitted; the project met the deadline and yesterday formally sent in an application for \$3.3 million in road improvements, with ODOT as our co-applicant.

State Updates

Mark Ellsworth reported that Governor Kulongoski's Executive Order to direct state agencies to support the project is now issued! On July 16, The Economic Revitalization Team (ERT) comprising representatives from all state agencies held an all-day meeting in Vernonia. Senator Betsy Johnson asked ERT for assistance for Vernonia. ODOT's David Kim called after the meeting to offer assistance (as mentioned above). DEQ began a review as a response to the need for assistance.

State agencies listed in the draft Executive Order all said that they were willing to assist. The question of how a new Governor will impact the process was asked. Mr. Ellsworth reported that the order is in force until 2013. It carries the weight of law through then. There are very strict requirements on what can be in an Executive Order, so the Governor is being very judicious with them.

Steve reported on two more steps with the planning commission. One is to annex all sites of the school into the urban growth boundary. Last week a meeting was held for conditional use permit for site review. The project manager went through that process and got approval with conditions attached.

Economic Development Committee

Sharon Bernal reported on Catherine Mater's visit to Vernonia August 19 to meet with Columbia County forestry owners of 10 acres or more. Anyone who has land in a Trust did not receive letter due to a glitch, so Sharon Bernal made phone calls on the day of the meeting. Given that glitch, the attendance of 80 people was remarkably high.

Catherine Mater spoke about sustainable living including the possible positive affect on landowners and their health care –and asked if the concepts discussed were worth pursuing to Phase Two. The vast majority agreed that the concepts were worth pursuing. Regence Blue Cross gave a presentation and discussed financial feasibility of the proposed project. The goal is to

have a beta test site in place by the end of 2011. Catherine Mater was on OPB explaining the project the next day.

Sharon Bernal suggested that it would be helpful to have Catherine give presentation to the community, maybe at an off-school site. The community benefit aspect was a well-received part of the presentation: 80% of the health plan benefits go to the forest owners and 20% are donated to the community. One question was about a 30 year contract and its offset: what happens when health care costs shift again, since sustainable health care rates are much bigger than carbon sequestration.

Vernonia Rural Sustainability Center (VRSC)

Stephanie Hallock said that the Natural Resources Center has changed its name to the Vernonia Rural Sustainability Center. At the July VRSC meeting, Bob Parker and Brie Barker (UO) gave a preview feasibility study for the Center. Aaron Miller, John Donovan and Steve Effros drafted a concrete vision and mission statement. The Community Survey committee worked on a survey to find out what VRSC, the Upper Nehalem Watershed Council and the Vernonia Health Center Board should provide for Vernonia and our partners. Bruce Shoemaker of Actidyne Survey Research, who has done other surveys for Columbia County, volunteered his time to review the draft survey, attend the VRSC meeting and make several recommendations for the survey.

Amy Grotta and Chip Bubl (OSU Extension) and Jennifer Allen (PSU) will host a field trip to Vernonia September 14 for OSU and PSU faculty and will invite PCC and UO faculty as well. They will have tours and discuss the Center's potential uses and concepts.

Alissa reported that she and Aaron met with Martha Richards of the Miller Foundation to discuss a planning grant for the Center. The meeting went well and the proposal will be submitted by the end of this month.

Community Projects Update

Bill Haack reported that he and Scott Laird visited with three staff from Oregon Parks and Recreation to request an extension to meeting the proposed goals of the Vernonia Bicycle Skills Park project located in the O-A mill Pond open space. Because of the Governor's Executive Order, the delay was granted, showing that the Executive Order is helping with other projects in Vernonia in addition to the schools. Thank you from Scott Laird on behalf of the community and City Park Committee.

Bill reported that he is now interim city administrator with the departure of Bob Young. He has been asked to help hire the next city administrator, who will be part-time for the next 2-3 years.

Bill will be meeting with VSD staff to integrate the planning of the future park at the current school site, since the City will get 25+ acres plus additional land in the area and needs to know how to master plan and manage this open space.

The City will submit an EPA brownfield assessment grant within the next 60 days, potentially in partnership with Columbia County, 2-3 other cities and DEQ. The proposed application will either be city-wide (focused on Vernonia) or multi-jurisdictional issues. At a minimum, the application will have a focus on downtown Vernonia, to mitigate 8 -12 former gas stations and other DEQ target sites in town. That application will be for \$1 million and funds may be available until next year; it will take a couple of years to do the assessments and planning work to clean up the sites.

DEQ SRF Loan Staff will allow the City to use our open SRF loan (we have a balance of \$4 million) to fund a project manager and specific professional reports needed prior to completing final engineering needed in the development of the updated wastewater treatment plant. DEQ also mentioned that when we borrow additional funds, there may be up to \$1 million principal forgiveness available to fund the final wastewater plant improvements.

Friday the City, including members of the Vernonia Community Learning Center meet with PCC to revisit what value the Learning Center can add to the town. Ideas include a small business economic development center.

Mark Ellsworth expressed appreciation for the efforts of Bill Haack. He and the audience all agreed that we are so grateful for his knowledge, integrity, wisdom, and dedication.

Questions and Next Steps

Vernonia Health Center Board would like to offer support for a school based health center.

Upcoming Events

Sept. 3, Chalkboard tour

Sept 14, OSU/PSU faculty field trip to Vernonia

Sept 28, VRSC meeting 11:00am District Office; School Town Hall, 7pm

Oct 26, Oregon Solutions Steering Committee, Scout Cabin, 1-2:30pm