



Vernonia Schools – Oregon Solutions Steering Committee
Scout Cabin, Vernonia
January 11, 2011, 2-3:30pm
Minutes

Attendance: Dan Brown, Community Action Team; Carol Cox; Ken Cox, VSD Superintendent; John Donovan, Metropolitan Group; Steve Effros, VSD Project Manager, Aadland Evans; Bill Haack, City of Vernonia Administrator; Stephanie Hallock, Oregon Solutions; Tony Hyde, co-convener and Columbia County Commissioner; Alissa Keny-Guyer, Oregon Solutions; Greg Kintz, VSD School Board; Scott Laird, Vernonia’s Voice; Heather Lewis, Vernonia Health Center Board; Kelly Marks, PCC; Betsy Miller, VSD; Josette Mitchell, Mayor of Vernonia; Dawn Plews, VSD; Marc Siegel, Senator Merkley’s office.

Welcome/Introductions

Commissioner Tony Hyde

School Project Update

Dr. Ken Cox, Steve Effros

Dr. Cox reported on three events held for the Groundbreaking ceremony on 12-2-2010. Over 300 people attended the first event on the new school site. There was great TV and print media coverage. KGW spent the entire day in Vernonia on groundbreaking day. Ken handed out an Oregonian article dated 12-3-2010, and there was an excellent editorial about the Oregon Solutions teamwork in Vernonia on 12-2-2010 as well.

During the second event, held in the Washington Grade School gym, Governor Kulongoski gave an Oregon State flag to the student body for the new school. VSD Student President Paul Whiteman gave Governor Kulongoski a book of flood pictures drawn after the 2007 flood by Ms. Gingerich’s third grade class. Ms. Gingerich and several of the students (now sixth graders) who drew the pictures were recognized. Event three was an appreciation reception held in the VHS gym to recognize all the private and public sector partners who have helped with planning and funding for the new school. The day was a BIG success. Tony Hyde commented that Governor Kulongoski considers Vernonia part of his legacy. The Steering Committee agrees and is extremely appreciative of the Governor’s support.

Steve Effros reported that the actual ground breaking occurred at same time as the ceremony. There has been a lot of progress since – see the 24/7 web cam: www.vernonia.k12.or.us. Early site work will continue through February; extra weatherization is necessary due to the late start. BOORA and P&C are working with Steve to finalize the full build out construction package, fine tuning details, and staying on budget. In mid February, Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP) bids will go out for all parts not yet done. Late summer 2011, walls will be up and interior work should begin.

The Vernonia Rural Sustainability Center (VRSC) building is currently scheduled to be constructed at same time as the main K-12 building but will be bid out separately from the rest of the project; P&C will attempt to include as much local labor as possible with that building. Ken noted that a web blog by Leo MacLeod posted 1-10-11 lists local labor.

ODOT will take the design developed to date, package state and city roads into one set of documents, put it out to bid, and oversee construction. Everything connects together: sidewalks, traffic, etc. Thursday our design team will meet with ODOT's design team to kick off the project.

The surprise announcement of ODOT's \$3.8 million funding during the groundbreaking ceremony was a huge and welcome surprise. Lynn Schoessler of OBDD, Mark Ellsworth, Tony Hyde and Senator Betsy Johnson did months of work with ODOT to secure this.

Private Sector Campaign Update

John Donovan, Alissa Keny-Guyer

John recapped cultivation events from 2010 and handed out an article regarding year-end events. Foundation and corporate support is going well. Community fundraising is important and will continue. The community phase of the campaign will expand geographically this spring, following a successful Alumni reunion and Gordon Smith's Vernonia Business Challenge.

The gap in funding is closing in on the \$8 million range. National foundations will be asked for funding, now that we have local public and private support. A late January briefing meeting is set with Governor Kitzhaber; one topic of will be how the executive order has been helpful and could continue to be helpful. Our campaign video will be updated with scenes from the groundbreaking and comments from Gov. Kitzhaber.

Providence recently gave \$10k for the project. Vernonia Hands on Art (VHOA) is playing a vital role in seeking a \$350k grant from Murdock Trust. Alissa Keny-Guyer noted that foundations may take nine months to turn around funding requests; the process has taken a lot of time but it is proceeding with several foundations.

Federal Updates

Marc Siegel, Dan Brown

Marc reported that we are still waiting for the US Senate Energy and Water appropriations bill for the school rebuild. The money is on hold; we should have more clarity in March. The \$300k appropriations was one of only four energy committee grants that were recommended for Oregon. The Oregon Delegation pushed it forward for Vernonia. Marc offered to speak to Nora Khalil regarding appropriations requests for 2012.

Dan Brown said that Oregon Emergency Management (OEM) may use Vernonia as an example of how FEMA can do long term monitoring for its National Flood Insurance Program compliance using GIS. VSD's team, including Ken, Steve, Jim Johnson and Dan Brown, is still doing weekly Friday calls with the FEMA/OEM team. The FEMA funds are now at Region X in Seattle. We are waiting for a Large Project Notification (LPN). Nora and Marc are trying to reach people on appropriations committees and Richard Krikava (FEMA Seattle) to find out when the money will be released. We will have a giant check party with FEMA, OEM and other guests when the award is announced.

State Updates

Commissioner Tony Hyde

The Committee agreed that Mark Ellsworth is a vital part of this project and hope that he will continue to have a role in the new state administration. Steve Marks now has a job with Pew Foundation. He will be missed and we will find out about his replacement in Congressman Wu's office.

Tony Hyde commented that in almost every legislative session for the past 12 years, Economic Revitalization Teams (ERTs) have been funded by counties. Tony advocates keeping ERTs; counties will find the money. Vernonia is a shining example of why ERTs are important. Alissa noted that ERTs have been a way for regional representatives for state agencies to coordinate, and Oregon Solutions can provide a model of collaborative governance with the private sector as well.

At the January meeting with Governor Kitzhaber, Senator Betsy Johnson and others will let him know that assistance is needed for wetland mitigation (\$500k) and the new schools construction project. The wetlands project is done concurrently with the school project, which has a seven-year maintenance agreement with City. Dan Brown said the wetlands clips the SE corner of the Bicycle Skills Park. Tony suggested seeking funds from Parks for skills parks and species identification; forming partnerships with Oregon Youth Conservation Corps, schools, Bureau of Labor and industries; and hosting a wetlands management certification program or apprenticeships. There is a need for a subcommittee to look for wetlands funds. Kelly Marks suggested National Science Foundation as a possible funding source.

Vernonia Rural Sustainability Center

Stephanie Hallock

Steve Effros showed how the VRSC design relates to the entire campus, highlighting the connection of public spaces within and between the two buildings. Stephanie reported that she is working on solidifying partnerships with university and nonprofit partners who want to pay rent for an office and/or offer courses for a fee. The Upper Nehalem Watershed Council (UNWC) is interested in having office space. The VRSC will send a community survey to all 1,825 district households. Robert Vergun, Ph. D, PCC Institutional Research Analyst, will assist with the survey.

Kelly Marks reported that the 12-3-2010 field trip for 6 PCC faculty and staff went well. More PCC staff plan to visit Vernonia soon. As more folks visit, more ideas develop. Kelly noted that higher education institutions have the chance to collaborate on a project. Aaron Miller provided notes ([see below](#)) with updates on student activities.

Declaration of Cooperation; OS role

Tony Hyde, Alissa Keny-Guyer

The initial Declaration of Cooperation (DOC) for Oregon Solutions project was signed in 2009. The addendum, updated in time for the December 2 Groundbreaking, includes Pinchot Institute, Upper Nehalem Watershed Council, Vernonia Health Center, PSU's Institute for Sustainable Solutions, and Vernonia Hands on Art. This document will be posted on the Oregon Solutions website. The internal purpose is to ensure we all know what each other is doing; the external purpose is to show the breadth of our partnerships. OS will continue to add partners to the declaration. The collaborative effort is important to national funders; it is a model of how to help communities, builds momentum and provides incentive to give funding. We will seek DOCs from new partners such as ODOT, DEQ, FEMA/OEM and The Ford Family Foundation. Oregon Forest Resources Institute (OFRI) is providing professional development to Vernonia Certified staff during the 2010-2011 school year. Stephanie will contact Aaron Miller as the point person for bringing Forestry resources to the table.

Alissa provided an overview of the role of OS. Please let her know if you have suggestions.

Community Projects Update

Mayor Mitchell, Bill Haack

[See Bill Haack's notes on last page](#)

Newly elected Mayor Josette Mitchell is also President of Vernonia Hands on Art. Willow Burch and Marilyn Nicks are new city council members. Bill Haack applauded ODOT for managing the Bridge Street and Missouri Avenue project that will require acquisition and negotiating easements for the school road improvements. The VSD and City will negotiate how to manage the old school property for the next two years. The Rose Avenue project is moving forward; DEQ's environmental review (No Further Action Letter) is almost complete. Steve Kelley (based in NC) of the Kelley Family Foundation came to visit Vernonia last week with Catherine Mater on a joint project she is doing with Rose Avenue, USDA and VSD.

The City has benefitted from the coordination and attention from state agencies stemming from Governor Kulongoski's Executive Order to help rebuild the schools. To complete the wastewater project, for example, the City had \$1.2 million in State CDBG funds, and the state has recently helped secure a \$300,000 EPA State and Tribal Assistance Grant (federal congressional appropriation) set aside for engineering. We will need state cooperation March – June 2012 because we will be applying for another \$1 million "principal forgiveness" as part of a future funding package, and the City will need to hire a project manager. Oregon Association of Water Utilities is assisting with a survey, so we know how much we can borrow. The City is thinking ahead this time.

The City has applied for a \$400,000 EPA Brownfield Assessment grant to clean up petroleum and other hazards in the soil. This will help the wetland mitigation at OA pond site and the entire downtown district, which had eight gas station sites that the City must clean up for future development. Two weeks ago the Army Corps called to provide a visioning workshop to communities that are recovering from natural disasters. Army Corps funding will allow the City to hire a local artist to work with city planners and students to draw the future. Bill will contact Ken Cox to involve students.

Heather Lewis reported that the Vernonia Health Center Board (VHCB) has begun a capitol campaign to raise \$1.6 million for the new health clinic to be built on Rose Avenue. The Ford Family Foundation has supported this effort by awarding a small planning grant. VHCB was pleased to announce its first corporate contributor was US Bank. VHCB just signed a Declaration of Cooperation with the School Rebuild project; it cannot contribute dollars, but is contributing staff time and leveraging partnerships with Association of Health Education Careers (AHEC) and OHSU for school curriculum and is working with the school district to support a school based health clinic. The VHCB has also been exploring the opportunities brought forward by the Pinchot Institute and Catherine Mater on the Forest Health and Human Health initiatives and how that may contribute to the delivery of medical services for the community.

Questions & Next Steps

Commissioner Tony Hyde

*Steering Com meetings: 2nd Tuesday every other month, 2-3:30pm, Vernonia
January, March, May, July, September, November

Tuesday, Feb 8, 2011 Town Hall 6:30pm-8:00pm VHS cafeteria
6 different sessions, PBIS, Title 1, Budget, etc.

Vernoniaschool.org and Vernonia.k12.or.us – websites provide information.

Adjourn 3:43pm

VSD Update from Aaron Miller, Principal Washington Grade School and Mist Grade School

There are several new developments on VRSC Projects. Here is a brief summary of what is happening at this time.

Upper Nehalem Watershed Council Projects

1. OYCC – Oregon Youth Conservation Corps
 - a. Students in this group work on UNWC projects each Tuesday and Thursday, replanting riparian zones.
2. Native Plant Nursery and Identification Garden
 - a. Small Woodlands Association Grant
 - i. Our greenhouse and composters have arrived and are being put together by the VHS shop class, and once completed Kindergarten, Middle School and High School teachers will begin propagating native plant species to be utilized in UNWC projects, as well as landscaping our new school facility.
 - ii. We are working on grants and with the BLM (through the UNWC) to expand our Native Plant Nursery, and the number of students participating in these programs.
 - b. PCC Partnership
 - i. Elizabeth Brewster, Landscape Engineering Chair at PCC, is very excited about our partnership. Her Winter 2012 Landscape class will be all about landscaping the new Vernonia School District campus with native plants. There are very cool possibilities for her students to work with our students, to put together our new campus. She also has many students who are in need of practicum hours, and she was very interested in having UNWC projects as part of their options for practicum hours, including their work with VSD students.
 - c. Trout Rearing
 - i. Mrs. Richmond's 4th grade class is raising trout this year. Next year ODFW will provide trout and salmon eggs for this project.

VHS Forestry Class

1. Curriculum and Partnerships
 - a. Byron Brown, VHS Social Studies Teacher, will be offering this elective next year. He is working with the Knappa HS forestry teacher, Oregon Forest Resources Institute and the Association of Oregon Loggers (AOL) to put together a comprehensive curriculum for this class.
2. Land to Work
 - a. In addition to the curriculum work, there are several options for land use available for this program. Mark Standley with Log-Safe, Inc. has options for land available for our use, as do the City of Vernonia, Longview Fibre and Weyerhaeuser.

OFRI Magazine

Aaron Miller and Ashley Rogers attended a workshop to develop state approved curriculum in the area of Forestry and Service Learning. The booklet compiling this work has a quote from Aaron on the back. The point being we are in the forefront of this statewide initiative.

City Updates:

Notes from Bill Haack

Extension of Contract with ColPac for Professional Services

School Road Improvements

- ODOT to manage entire project for City of Vernonia (COV)/VSD
- Potential for residual balance available for another COV project

Rose Avenue Project

- DEQ completed Gas Vapor Analysis, likely to yield NFA
- OPRD and COV are clear on legal language for Exchange Agreement
- Key stakeholders continue to meet on project planning
- VSD & COV may contract with Mater (PIFC) on USDA application
- COV to contact Kelley Family Foundation
- WOEC & COV to continue to assess options to complete land assembly
- COV to contact OBDD to fund required road improvements
- CAT (informal project manager) submits application to MMT for \$50k
- CAT & COV to develop overall funding strategy

Wastewater Facility Update Plan

- DEQ accepted TM submitted by B&C as substantially complete
- COV to issue RFQ for firm to carry project through Pre/Final engineering
- COV to issue RFQ for Project Manager
- COV to secure professional services to complete a Utility Rate Study
- COV to secure professional services to complete a Geotechnical Study

Brownfield Assessment Plans

- Assist development readiness in CBD and at OA Mill Pond
- No word on EPA request (\$400k) – likely hear in April 2011
- OBDD, DEQ and EPA meeting with City on monthly basis
OBDD potential for working grant if EPA grant awarded
- ACoE planning a visioning session at EPA's request