

## Vernonia Bond Measure Fact Sheet - November 6, 2009

After two 500 year floods in 11 years and having schools in temporary buildings for two years, Vernonia took a giant step forward when a significant majority passed the \$13 million bond measure to build the new Vernonia K-12 school.

Concerning recent media reports:

**On Nov. 3, Vernonia voters passed a bond to build new schools with 61 percent in support of the measure and with over 67% voter turnout. Recent media coverage suggests the bond passed without voters understanding the costs. That is certainly not the case.** The details of the public education effort are listed below.

**The Vernonia School District followed the advice of professional experts (a bond measure lawyer and a bond financial consultant) in creating the bond measure language for the recently passed school construction bond.**

- Vernonia School District submitted the ballot measure by fax on August 25 and mailed the same day. The explanatory statement was not submitted because we were told by the Columbia County elections office that nothing else was needed. The Columbia County elections office forwarded the information to Washington County.

**There was a thorough and robust public education effort by the district and the bond committee re: the bond measure, including the estimated of a cost of \$1.90/\$1,000 of assessed value.**

- The bond committee sent a mailing to all registered voters of the school district on September 10th, 2009 - including the **estimated cost of \$1.90/\$1,000 of assessed value**
- The bond committee paid for and sent out the special school bond issue the first week of October 2009 through the local community paper, the *Vernonia Voice*. The potential cost was placed in an article, and a copy of a tax statement was printed showing how to calculate its effect on property owners
- Articles in the *Vernonia Voice* included the **estimated cost of \$1.90/\$1,000 of assessed value** from information provided by the district in its August, September and October 2009 editions.
- More than 100 people participated in four Q & A public forums in the community before the election, and the **estimated cost of \$1.90/\$1,000 of assessed value** was discussed at each forum

**Oregon law does not require ballot titles to provide cost per thousand data, in large part because, in approving a general obligation bond, the voters**

**authorize the District to levy an amount sufficient to repay annual debt service on the par amount authorized.**

- Because levy rates are set based upon assessed valuation, which grows by different amounts every year, it is impossible to commit to a specific levy rate. Thus, putting a levy rate in the ballot title can be misleading. The District provided this information in its communication materials in order to give voters a clear estimate of the annual cost.

**Vernonia is a small and resilient community of 2,200, and the bond measure is a very big deal for this community.**

- People strongly supported the measure with 61% voting “yes” because they knew the importance of rebuilding the schools. Over 67% of the voters voted, which is an enormous turnout, especially given no candidates were on the ballot
- As this was the only measure in front of the community, the district provided proactive information on the details of the bond and the campaign conducted extensive outreach resulting in a vast array of direct mailings, news articles in the two community papers, signs, public meetings, billboards and other devices calling attention to the election, to the costs of the measure and to the important aspects of the decision.

**The passing of this bond marks an important investment in Vernonia’s future. It will provide the educational experiences our children need, keep jobs and families here in Vernonia, and provide a strong and much-needed community hub.**