

District promises oversight of bond projects

By Jim Cornelius
News Editor

When the Sisters School District sought public input before seeking a \$10.7 million bond issue, one of the major points of concern was oversight of bond-funded construction projects.

That is, in large part, a reaction to the failure of the roof at Sisters High School — which will be repaired but not replaced with bond funds.

“That was a major community concern,” school board member Amanda Clark.

Roof repair is only one among several projects that will require oversight. The bond also calls for \$2.7 million worth of safety and security updates. These include remodeling entryways for visibility; securing access points; installing automated access controls, locks and security cameras.

The district also plans to spend \$3.4 million on rehabilitating Reed Stadium and its track, bringing it into ADA compliance, and building tennis courts and a new ball field.

Asked how the new

athletic facilities fall on the need/want continuum, Superintendent Curt School told *The Nugget* that they would be community assets.

“Our schools are parks facilities in many ways,” he said.

“ We will have a dedicated project manager... and we will have a community oversight committee.”
—Amanda Clark

Proponents of the bond measure note that Sisters is competing with other regional districts for enrollment and facilities — including athletic fields and courts — which are important to attracting students, and also for staging revenue-producing events.

Scholl also notes that the schools need to develop the property where the new ball field is to be located or risk losing irrigation rights.

Critics fault the bond for including new athletic facilities — which they perceive as more of a “want” than a “need”

— when taxpayers are being asked to pay for deferred maintenance.

All of the repairs, remodels and new construction will be supervised and placed under community oversight, Clark told *The Nugget*.

“We will have a dedicated project manager ... and we will have a community oversight committee,” she said. “Our goal is to be as transparent as possible.”

The position of capital project manager will be a temporary paid position. The project manager will have direct accountability for oversight of projects. The citizen’s oversight committee will be by appointment with an open application process searching for volunteers with relevant expertise to consult and advise on projects.

One aspect of the process that has been the subject of some confusion is that no bids can be solicited until the bonds are approved by voters. The district’s allocation of bond funds are based on “good-faith estimates,” not bids. Prices could go up or down between now and the time the projects

are actually put out to bid.

“The scope of what you’ll be able to accomplish (with bond funds) is dependent upon the market at that time,” said Scholl.

School construction projects are also subject to state and federal rules regarding public contracting.

The district will have to prioritize projects and if costs outstrip the funds available through the bond issue, some projects may have to be deferred.

“Obviously safety and security are one of the top priorities,” Clark noted.

Clark also emphasized that there are two aspects to school budgeting. The operational side — which is supported by local option tax funds — is the portion of the budget that funds classroom activity and programs. The bond is to fund the facilities side of the equation — which local option dollars cannot be used for.

“I think it’s very important for the community to understand that the local option is for operational costs,” Clark said. “That’s for teachers in the classroom. This (the bond) is for infrastructure costs.”

Sisters salutes...

• Jamie Vohs of Sisters Little League wrote:

The old fence on the Sisters Community Church South Field was in dire need of being replaced.

Jeff Staudenmaier worked with Tyler Hoyt at Hoyt’s Lumber to get the material for the complete project.

Additional contributors were: Knife River donated concrete; Sisters Rental donated equipment; High Country Disposal donated construction containers

Because the labor costs of hiring a fencing company to do it were so high, we asked for volunteers to help complete the project.

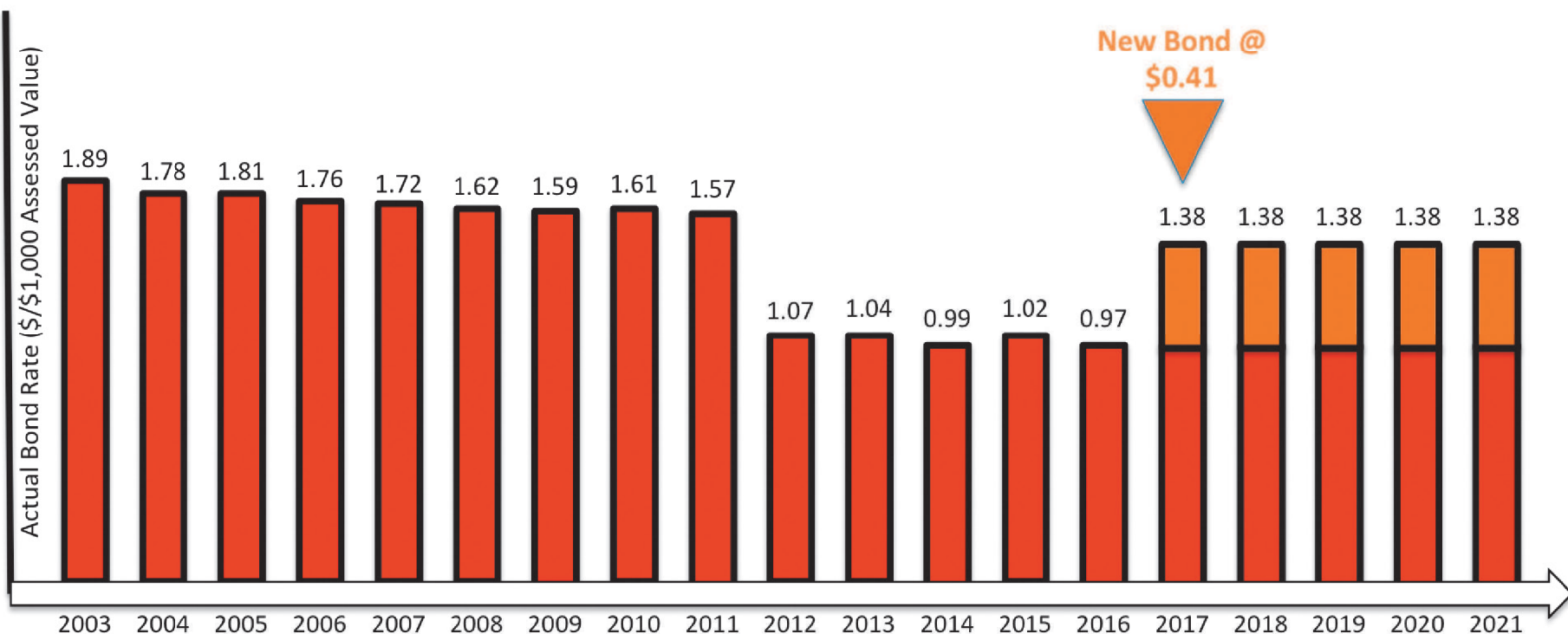
Those individuals were:

Jeff Staudenmaier; Doug Gibney; Jason Monaghan; Jeremy Buller; Andy Pittman; Chris Grissom; Kyle Fischer; Ryan Vohs; Charlie Patterson; and Trevin Duey.

It would have cost us over \$6,000 in labor if these individuals did not step up and help. It would have taken us multiple years to raise enough funds.

It’s time to Invest in Sisters

The proposed bond returns us to a **normal and healthy** rate so we can make the appropriate investments in our schools and community. Our rate fell dramatically in 2011 – and it was not wise to issue a bond given the economy at that time – but now it’s time to **Invest in Sisters**



For more information, visit:

www.ourschoolsourcommunity.org

Ad sponsored for and paid for by Competing for Tomorrow PAC