

Bond Committee

12 community members working on bond proposal

A bond recommendation committee met September 9, and will meet several more times this fall. The goal is to make a bond recommendation to the Baker School Board by November 1.

A bond proposed by Baker School District last November failed to garner enough votes. Since then, Superintendent Mark Witty has garnered community input through numerous listening sessions.

"In all of the sessions we heard: too much money, too long of a term, and use the buildings you have," he said.

Extensive work by a Long Range Facilities Planning Committee from 2017-2018 identified eight priorities: capacity, safety and security, 21st cen-

tury learning environment, operational costs and energy efficiency, deferred maintenance and repair costs, community facilities, technology, and limiting transitions for children and families.

For a future proposals, bond requests will focus on capacity, and safety and security.

Capacity refers to the number of students in each school compared to how many each was built to hold. For example, Brooklyn's capacity is 348 and the enrollment is 442. Baker High School, by comparison, has 445 students in a school built for 831.

A reorganization of grades could look like this: remodel BHS to accommodate grades 7 and 8; utilize Baker Middle School for grades 5 and 6;

house grades 3 and 4 at South Baker Intermediate; and keep kindergarten through grade 2 at Brooklyn Primary.

Witty projects the proposed bond to be between \$6 million and \$10 million. This would meet requirements to get a \$4 million Oregon School Capital Improvement Matching grant. Additional funds may also be available through the Student Success Act (House Bill 3427) which has student health and safety as one of its four priorities.

Members of the bond recommendation committee are Martin Arritola, Tori Brown, Jess Blatchford, Travis Cook, Stacy DeLong, Riley Hall, Coby Mastrude, Bob McKim, Lynette Perry, Wes Price, Angela Robb, and Dana Simonski.

Central update

A committee comprised of community members formed in the spring of 2019 to assess the Central Building and formulate recommendations for its future.

"They've given us really good direction," said Superintendent Mark Witty.

The building's hazardous materials have been identified as lead and asbestos, which must be abated before any projects move forward. Baker School District has transferred ownership of the building to Baker Technical Institute where it will become a project for the brownfield class. That class, which finds grants to clean up contaminated buildings and lots, will seek funding from the Department of Environmental Quality.

"It opens up great funding possibilities," Witty said of the transfer.

The next steps include an RFP to identify what is necessary to fix the structure, and an RFP for a roof design.

"The goal is to leverage grants to upgrade the Central property thereby lowering the risk to investors who might be considering the property in a way that could benefit the community," Witty said.

Did you know?

Every winter and spring, seniors at Baker High School begin applying for scholarships to help fund education and training beyond high school.

The class of 2019 earned a total of **\$515,825** in scholarship money. Of that amount, \$140,315 were local scholarship; \$215,610 were college-awarded scholarships; \$159,900 were from the Leo Adler Foundation.

Baker School District continues to make improvements to facilities. Below is a graph detailing the district's investments since 2007.

