

Crane to stay on for another year

By **BILL BRADSHAW**
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — Tom Crane, the interim superintendent for Enterprise Schools, has agreed to stay on another year, he said Thursday, Feb. 3.

The former Enterprise school teacher and coach who returned last summer to fill the post vacated by Erika Pinkerton initially came out of retirement to take the job for a single year. He said that school board members met with a representative of the Oregon State School Board Association to talk with the search company that is seeking a permanent superintendent and concluded that Enterprise's best alternative is to keep Crane on for another year.

"There is a large number of superintendent vacancies this year," Crane said.

He said there are at least 28 vacancies throughout the state.

"It's a tough job," he said, with all the added difficulties of the COVID-19

pandemic making it harder.

Replacing Crane with a newcomer now would be all the more difficult because of the ongoing projects within the district, such as the construction work funded largely by the 2020 school bond.

"They spent a lot of time training me about the bond and they'd have to do it again," he said.

There's also the task of replacing Enterprise High School Principal Blake Carlsen, who resigned last fall. Carlsen, who is leaving to be closer to family in Texas, originally was going to leave at the end of 2021, but asked to stay on until the end of the current school year, Crane said. He said the school board approved that request.

Although Crane was "happily retired" when he took the interim post, he's content to stay on another year.

"I like what I'm doing and being back," he said. "The community has really been welcoming."



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

As the snow begins to melt off the roof of the Enterprise School, the replacement of that roof becomes more imperative. Plans are in place to replace the roof this summer, along with other projects.

Schools:

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functional life," Hibbert said. "The roofing product has degraded and needs to be replaced."

The roofing job was originally intended to be done last summer, but the contractor who put in the original bid was unable to obtain the needed insulation because of COVID-related supply chain problems. As an emergency measure, the district contracted with a La Grande firm to do a spray coating in October to get the roofs through this winter.

The other priorities scheduled for this year include mitigating stormwater runoff issues and asbestos abatement. The latter has to be accomplished with the HVAC work.

The district had to rebid the roof project in December, but the district only received one bid — which was accepted. Palmer Roofing of Pendleton submitted the approved bid. Palmer's bid was for about \$2.3 million — about \$1 million higher than the previous approved bid, cutting into the available funds, Hibbert said.

INTERESTED IN A BID?

To make a bid on one of the subcontractor projects at the Enterprise school:

Who: Joseph Hull at McCormack Construction Co., Pendleton

Phone: 541-276-1353 or 541-969-4475

Email: joseph@mccormackconstruction.com

Limited funds

But increased costs of building materials have limited what the district can do with its \$8.85 million, Crane and Hibbert agreed.

"Our total project budget hasn't changed. It's just how much we can buy with that money," Hibbert said. "Our goal is to buy as much for the district as we possibly can. We've just really been challenged with supply-chain issues and price increases that have been nationwide in the construction industry since COVID started."

Some of the projects now scheduled for summer of 2023 that could be affected include accessibility upgrades to comply with Americans with Disability Act standards and remodeling the science room and the girls' locker room, Hibbert said. Those are the highest-priority projects for next year, although lesser projects also are planned.

The accessibility upgrades include the possibility of elevators in the middle and high school buildings, each of which is two stories.

"Our original plan in the bond scope had been to do two elevators ... elevators give you a lot of bang for your buck, but they're expensive," Hibbert said. "So we may need to revisit other ways to improve that accessibility; maybe we're not doing an elevator, but we can improve accessibility routing and things like that."

But Crane said they haven't given up on those later projects.

"Nothing has been taken off of the list," he said. "We have a Bond Oversight Committee that is going to, when we get done with this summer and we know the amount of money we have (left over), and will recommend which project or projects we can do the following summer."

Hibbert agreed. "What's great about that Bond Oversight Committee is that a lot of the folks on it were in the long-range facil-

ity planning effort so they've had continuity through the whole project and can really speak to original priorities and present a well-rounded recommendation to the district's board," she said.

Construction schedule

At present, plans are to begin work in May, although school doesn't recess for the summer until June 9 and the kids return in the last week of August for fall term.

"We know that the school's going to be a construction zone this summer," Crane said. "I'm already getting requests for groups to use the buildings and I'm having to tell them we can't do that this year. There are athletic events that happen during the summer, camps — basketball camps and things like that — those kinds of things won't happen. They might have to go to a different high school. We might talk with Joseph. I know Wallowa's got a construction project this summer because Tammy (Jones, superintendent at Wallowa) was in the same boat with things being requested from her during the summer. So I think we would talk with Joseph. We have a meeting coming up with those stakeholders — coaches and such — to help them plan their summer. There are teachers coming in, computer repair, teachers moving classrooms. There's just a lot of planning to do before summer comes."

"It's going to be an extended summer," Hibbert said. "We think we're going to start on some exterior areas in May of 2022. We'll still have a contractor presence through the fall to get some work finished up, but we're going to try to stay out of the way of the main educational and athletics bases but we're still having to figure out the details on that. We know we'll be back in the summer of '23, we just don't know how much money we're going to have left. We'll need the

committee recommendation on that."

Crane and Hibbert said that while McCormack Construction of Pendleton was selected as the general contractor, numerous bids for subcontractors are still being sought.

A subcontractor outreach meeting was held Jan. 28 where McCormack reached out to its entire subcontractor network. Hibbert said about 10 attended the meeting, at least two of whom were local to Wallowa County.

"We wanted to make sure folks in Wallowa County knew about these projects and had the chance to bid on them," she said. "The whole point of that outreach meeting was to make sure the local subcontractor community had the chance to ask questions early and be aware of the bidding schedule. One of the district's priorities is to keep bond dollars and spend them locally if they can. We can't guarantee that a local contractor gets part of the job, but we can give them every opportunity for them to know about it in advance and make sure that they know of the project and they can plan for it on their bidding schedule."

Stretching the funds

As for funding, the district is doing its best to stretch the money available.

"We're trying to buy as much as we can within the budget, but we're also trying to stretch that budget and get additional funds, as well," Hibbert said. "Our team was discussing this morning Energy Trust of Oregon incentives and we think that we'll be able to get at least \$70,000 in incentives for our roof project, for energy savings, for adding insulation. So, we're really trying to look under every stone trying to get the district some additional money."

The Energy Trust of Oregon is a nonprofit organization committed to delivering clean, affordable energy to 1.8 million utility customers, according to its website.

Crane said he's certain the school board has no plans for a supplemental bond levy.

"No, that's up to the school board, but it's never been on the table and I don't think it ever would be," he said. "We're looking for grants and such."

ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

EMILY LOVE

Emily Love turned in arguably her two best games for the Enterprise girls basketball team in its final two games of the regular season. The junior scored 18 points Feb. 11 in a 65-43 at Pilot Rock. A night later, in the Outlaws' final regular-season home game, she carried the offense with 23 points, including 15 in the second half, as Enterprise earned a 50-30 win over Weston-McEwen.

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