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Pivot Architecture, the Eugene architectural firm engaged by the district, has been heavily involved in helping to decide which modifications need to be made to bring buildings up to current code standards and determine future usage requirements. Curt Wilson, the lead architect for Pivot, has been advising the board during the year-long process in what could ultimately prove to be a three-year or more effort.

"All of this really started with the technical evaluation of the buildings last year," said Grzeskowiak. "Having a team of professional engineers go through and evaluate all facilities from top to bottom, including all sub-systems, gave us much more information than in past efforts. We knew there was a need to do the projects, and the engineering team confirmed that for the public and the board. I had been asked by board and community members to objectively define the differences between need and want in terms of facility planning, and with the technical review we have accomplished that task."

Pivot Architecture was selected to oversee this critical element of the process in part due to the firm's previous work with municipalities and educationally oriented enterprises. The organization was the lead design team for major renovations recently undertaken at Lane Community College, the Willamette Education Center and facilities at the Eugene and Mapleton School Districts.

Grzeskowiak provided an overview of the work being recommended to upgrade all three schools "while keeping in mind the importance of properly spending the money of area residents," he said.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL:

The south end of the elementary building is the oldest facility in the district and has several age-related problems. The elementary school used to operate as two separate schools. By building a series of new rooms in the courtyard area between the buildings the entire facility can be joined together into one unified school. Bringing the 1965 structure up to current building codes during a remodel will actually be more expen-

sive than building new, Pivot said.

One plus is that the electrical, heating and plumbing systems, have been determined to be adequate in the elementary school.

As part of the new design, windowless rooms will be eliminated, and all classrooms will have direct access to natural sunlight.

MIDDLE SCHOOL:

The work at the middle school is the smallest scope of work and is focused around repair or preventative maintenance. For example, there is significant water intrusion along the south face of the building that needs to be re-flashed and re-sealed.

While this is being done, the water damage to windows, trim and other support or finish elements will be replaced.

Also, some of the organic material buried in the field area south of the stadium will be removed and filled to provide a safe area for outdoor physical education, which at this time could be unsafe and is considered a legal liability.

HIGH SCHOOL:

As expected, the work required at the elementary and middle schools are considerably less intrusive than what will be needed for the high school. The problems there are so significant, and repair costs estimated to be so high, that the Siuslaw School Board decided that a complete a tear down and rebuild will be required.

Grzeskowiak realizes the building doesn't appear to be in bad shape to the casual observer, but a deeper look by Pivot architects proved the contrary.

"The high school replacement is the biggest portion of the bond. In looking at a remodel, considering the manner of construction at that time and the new compliance standards, building new is the more economical option," Grzeskowiak said. "In designing the most efficient floor plan to meet the educational needs of the students and staff, the new building will actually cost less than the incremental remodel plan."

Grzeskowiak said he has appreciated the many efforts of the maintenance in keeping the decades-old heating and electrical systems operational, despite facing major challenges in obtaining parts and replacement



COURTESY IMAGE

Siuslaw High School has had few improvements in its decades of service to the Florence community. Now, the Siuslaw School Board is asking voters to approve a bond in the November election.

systems for the school.

"Our maintenance personnel have done a great job keeping the high school operational over the years. But now, so many systems are at the end of the operational life span. Replacing all of those systems and bringing the structure up to modern seismic standards would have been a challenge and would have left the main footprint of the building, and related safety issues, all still in place," said Grzeskowiak.

He added that a new high school will be more energy efficient and will reduce operational costs significantly. It will also offer students the safest, most modern educational facility that the community can provide.

Major security system upgrades will be incorporated into the new designs for all three buildings, which will include video cameras and intruder prevention locks.

Also notably, Grzeskowiak pointed out that the new high school will allow for inclusion of classes that are currently taught off-site, providing the physical space for both college-bound and career trade-focused students.

Another major advantage to residents goes beyond the need to protect and educate area students. The new facilities will

also provide a seismically secure space for thousands of citizens to gather in the event of a natural disaster.

"These projects are more than just about the school buildings themselves. They are also about part of the greater Florence community," Grzeskowiak said. "The goal of the district is education, but there will be secondary benefits as well. The new high school will now be up to seismic code and can serve as a community shelter in the time of an emergency."

There will also be tangential benefits that Grzeskowiak hopes residents will include when they consider the district's bond request.

"The construction will be a short-term boon to our local economy. Not only will there be opportunities for local people and companies to be part of the projects, specialty firms from outside of Florence will be staying here in town, eating in restaurants and putting money back into local businesses," Grzeskowiak said.

The performance of the board during the year leading up to this week's decision was mentioned by Grzeskowiak as being admirable considering the differing opinions and experiences of the directors.

Director Guy Rosinbaum said, "I can of course only speak for myself and not the board as a whole, but the last time we went out for a bond, voters made it clear they were willing to support a project such as this. We just didn't have enough information to provide answers to all the critical questions that were posed at the time.

"This time, I feel the district engaged early with experts in the field, as well as the school staff and community members to come up with a proposal that meets the needs at the high school as well as a lot of the additional needs throughout the district. It is a lot of money, but it is an amount that will complete the project without fear of cost overruns or shortcuts."

This sense of working collectively, with the future needs of the children served by the school district as the overriding framework for deciding what was needed, was echoed by Director Suzanne Mann-Heinz.

"I am very pleased with the process and the potential outcomes," she said. "The board

deliberated over this for nearly a year and gathered information from many sources, including a comprehensive facilities assessment, recommendations from a citizens' advisory committee, a telephone survey and input from several community meetings. Based on this, the board modified plans and shaved off over \$26 million from original estimates.

"A big part of attracting employers and employees lies in having good schools. For me personally, I am all about developing potential in our students and believe that a big part of education is safe, healthy, well-planned facilities."

Another important aspect of the discussion surrounding school improvements was highlighted by Grzeskowiak and re-emphasized by Rosinbaum.

"Let me stress this one point. We are in need of the new school and all of the ongoing updates outlined in this bond. Voting against this bond will not make the problems at the high school and elementary school go away," Rosinbaum said. "We have to deal with these issues now. They will not get less expensive in the future, nor is there any more time to put them off to a future date."

Perhaps the most encouraging outcome of the somewhat tortured process undertaken by the Siuslaw School District board and staff, from Grzeskowiak's perspective, was achieving a consensus among directors on what to ask the community to support.

"After much thoughtful deliberation over the last year, it was great to see the board come together and put forward a plan to the public that they unanimously support. What is coming before the voters are the essential elements to protect the community's investment in district facilities," said Grzeskowiak. "It is a great feeling to put forward a project that met the goals of the Board and that will help benefit our students and community."

The Siuslaw School District Board will place the bond measure on the November Election ballot.

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