

Plan to build FC gym taking shape

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

FALLS CITY — The Falls City School Board is investigating the feasibility of its new plan to build a gym at Falls City Elementary School without bond funding.

The idea would have much of the building put up with volunteer labor, led by Bob Young, a board member and owner of Robert Young Construction.

The board is estimating that it can afford to pay for a 30-year loan to build the gym, which, if built according to plan, would have the same useful life span as the Falls City High School gym, built in 1931.

The other option is to build a steel building, which could be less expensive and easier to put up, but would have half the lifespan and wouldn't be easy to add on to, Young said.

"It's still in really good shape. Now it's been kept up, but there's really no rot or anything in that," Young said about the high school gym. "I don't think there is any way to get a metal building to last that long. The thing with the stick built is it will last longer, be a better building."

Debbie Pavon, the district's business manager, provided the board with estimates on loans on a variety of amounts and durations, all at 5.25 percent interest, at its meeting on March 21.

A \$300,000 loan would cost \$19,879 per year at 30 years; a \$350,000 loan would cost \$23,192 at 30 years; and a \$400,000 loan would cost \$26,505 a year at 30 years.

Superintendent Jack Thompson said his concern with taking out a loan is the prospect of losing the district's local option levy, which helps pay for school programs.

"The looming unknown out there is our local option. We've got two more years on the local option," Thompson said. "I wasn't scared about that before, but now that we've had two (gym) bonds fail ... that's a fear. That's a substantial amount of money. You are talking \$100,000."

He added that with careful budgeting, the district still might be able to pull it off.

"If you kept it under \$40,000 per year, you could probably make work," he said.

Young said he doesn't believe the district has a choice with the possibility of growth and eventually more mandated physical education minutes.

There may be another hurdle for the district's plan. The board asked Pavon and Thompson to investigate restrictions on submitting a bid for the project without labor costs — because of the plan to build the gym with volunteers. The exception to that are parts of the project that would require the expertise of subcontractors, Young said.

Board Chairwoman Jami Kidd said the Willamina School District built a facility in a similar manner recently, and they could start with contacting officials there.

"We need to find out if there are rules that dictate how we can do that," Young said. "I'm afraid there's going to be a problem somewhere."



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

Perrydale's kindergarten class listens as students in the high school's child development class give a presentation.

HANDS-ON TRAINING

Perrydale high school students tackle the job of teaching kinders

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

PERRYDALE — What color is Venus?

Perrydale high school senior Alex Hawes immediately responded to the question from a student in the Perrydale's kindergarten class.

"I'll go get the space book," he said, leaving the table were a small group of youngsters were busy coloring the sun and the planets on a strip of paper to make in to hats.

He returned seconds later with the book in hand.

"Let's see if we can find Venus in here," he said thumbing through the brightly illustrated book about space and the planets. "There's Venus right there, so it's kind of yellowish, yellow and blue."

Thursday's space-centered activity is part of a project in the high school

child development class, in which high school students help in preschool through second-grade classrooms and create special project activities for the young ones.

The class has high-schoolers spending two class periods a week assisting in classes, and two periods learning about early childhood education.

Teacher Misty Matthews created the class last year, using an advantage Perrydale has over other schools: All students, preschool through 12th grade, are on one campus.

"It makes sense," she said. "It's teaching them how to teach little ones."

Wednesday, the full class met with the kindergartners in the school's old gym for a short presentation of songs, stories and poems about space and space travel.

Then it was on to activi-

ties, such as the planet hat, making paper and drinking straw rockets, and space Twister.

Hawes said the class reminds him of an annual activity he used to do when he was one of the "little ones."

"I remember when I was a kid, in the shop program, we had this thing called boat building buddies," he said. "It was a way for us to interact with the high-schoolers. I remember that was fun, to be able to hang out with the high-schoolers and talk to them."

While Hawes won't be going into early childhood education, he said the class has taught him the value of a certain virtue.

"You learn a lot of patience, you know. It gives you little flashbacks of when you were a kid, and so you've got to learn to be patient with them," he said.

"With the younger ones, you

have to be more thorough in your explanations. I think the main thing you learn is patience."

Kindergarten teacher Jeneen Thomson said it's nice to have more help in the classroom when the class is divided into small groups — which is where the bulk of the learning takes place.

"Our student-to-teacher ratio goes way down," she said. "We are better able to meet the needs of kids."

Thomson said she sees signs that some of the high school students would make good teachers.

"I see that they are enlightened to the difference you can make with children," Thomson said. "The collaboration between the high school and the kindergarten students, I see it as a great win-win and a relationship builder."

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