

Falls City secures loan for facility

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

FALLS CITY — The Falls City School District secured a loan to begin the first phase of building a new gym and classroom facility at Falls City Elementary School.

A \$700,000 loan from Government Capital Corporation (GCC) will finance the first phase, which will build “a shell” to provide elementary students an indoor facility for physical education and recess. Later phases will provide space for games, locker rooms and more classrooms.

“The board has been talking about this for two years,” said Superintendent Art Houghtaling. “We’re excited. The loan really allows it to happen.”

Now, the district can hire an architect to get the project underway. Before building can begin, the district needs to complete soil tests, complete design and take construction bids. The goal to have a “shell” — an enclosed and heated building — complete by fall of this year. Construction of the first phase will be planned with plumbing and other needs for future expansion in mind.

GCC is a Texas-based firm specializing in helping public entities (cities, counties and schools) secure financing. The firm has assisted several school districts get loans for building improvements, updated technology, buying land and buses.

Falls City has about 210 students enrolled, an increase from 155 tallied in the Oregon Department of Education’s 2013-14 enrollment report. The loan provides funding to complete other smaller projects, such as expanding its cafeteria and adding a classroom at the elementary school.

Houghtaling said the dis-



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

The Falls City School district secured a loan for the first phase of a new gym and classroom facility at the elementary school. Now, students use a covered play shed for PE.

trict has a goal to provide a teacher for every grade level K-8, and enrollment increases are pushing the district to do it faster than anticipated.

“We are literally busting at the seams,” Houghtaling said.

The district twice asked voters to pass a bond to build a new gym, but both votes, one in May 2016 and the second the following November, failed by slim margins.

Without resources to build a new gym, elementary students have with the school playground and covered play area for recess and PE, or riding buses

down to the high school gym for PE classes. During rainy days, the covered play area can have up to 60 or 70 students under it at once, not leaving much room for play.

“Now we will have an enclosed area for the kids when it’s 38 degrees and raining,” he said.

Houghtaling added the gym at the high school is the only place middle school and high school teams can hold practices and games at this point. Adding basketball hoops and locker rooms in the future will alleviate scheduling conflicts and prevent late practices.

However, the second and third phases of the gym project will require additional funding through grants or a bond.

Falls City Business Manager Debbie Pavon said once the first phase is complete, the board will explore its next steps.

“The most important aspect of any project like this is funding,” she said. “We’re hoping the community will see the need and will reconsider, and approve, a bond. You don’t come across a district of this size, growing at the rate it is, with the remarkable students we have, and not do anything about it.”

PERRYDALE ROUNDUP

Girls basketball squad earns a pair of victories

Itemizer-Observer staff report
JEWELL — Perrydale’s girls basketball team earned a pair of league wins, defeating Crosshill Christian 38-14 on Jan. 2 and Jewell 46-23 on Thursday.

More importantly, the games marked the first time the Pirates played at full strength since the second game of the season.

Senior Vanessa Miller, junior Alyssa Lux and sophomore Amity Deters, all starters, were out with injuries.

“They bring a lot of maturity back to the team,” coach Terry Newton said. “All three of those girls are post players. Since we press a lot, we expend a lot of energy, so having extra bodies is huge.”

Newton said younger players, including freshman Cody Lawrence and sophomore Kaylee Rosenbalm, who have stepped up will continue to see playing time.

“We’ll have a deeper rotation,” Newton said.

The Pirates played Crosshill Christian Tuesday after press time. Perrydale plays at Falls City Thursday

at 5:30 p.m. and at Oregon School for the Deaf Tuesday at 6 p.m.

BOYS SPLIT GAMES: Perrydale’s boys basketball team fell to Crosshill Christian 50-44 on Jan. 2 before defeating Jewell 52-29 on Thursday.

The Pirates committed 23 turnovers against Crosshill.

“We didn’t play very well,” coach Brian Domes said. “That’s two-fold. They are a good team and they created a lot of problems for us that I didn’t expect. We just didn’t react very well to their pressure, but we still had a chance.”

Perrydale bounced back for a win against Jewell. Dustin Silver had 20 points and 14 rebounds during the game.

The Pirates played C.S. Lewis Tuesday after press time. Perrydale plays at Falls City Thursday at 7 p.m. and at Oregon School for the Deaf Tuesday at 7:30 p.m.

C.S. Lewis, Perrydale and Falls City entered the week in second, third and fourth in the Casco League standings.

“We’re a little undersized and Falls City is definitely not undersized,” Domes said. “That will pose a challenge for us. We’re looking forward to that one. They are our county rival.”

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