

SCHOOLS

New principals hired at two Hermiston schools

BY MAEGAN MURRAY
HERMISTON HERALD

Two familiar faces will take on new roles next year at two schools in the Hermiston School District.

The district announced Monday that current Armand Larive Middle School Principal Tom Spoo would take over as Hermiston High School principal next year, and current ALMS assistant principal Stacie Roberts would step up into the role of principal at ALMS.

Spoo taught welding previously before serving as assistant principal at Armand. He



Spoo

was then appointed to principal. He will replace current HHS Principal Jocelyn Jones who is retiring at the end of the school year.

Spoo, however, was not one of the originally selected finalist candidates interviewed for the position.

Superintendent Fred Maiocco said administrators ran into some complications in the search process for the HHS principal, and Spoo had originally expressed interest in the position, although



Roberts

he never submitted an application.

“So, when I encountered these complications, I approached Mr. Spoo about the position, and we came to an accord,” he said.

“I believe Tom is an absolutely great fit for HHS with the requisite administrative experience and character to lead continued improvement at the school. He will certainly help the school in its vision of chasing down premier.”

Spoo said he is looking for-

ward to working with the HHS staff and students.

“I am extremely grateful to the Armand Larive staff and students for the valuable experiences and memories from the past four years,” he said in a press release. “I have grown both personally and professionally during my time at ALMS.”

Roberts served as a sixth-grade teacher in the Hermiston School District before moving into the role of dean of students at Armand after her first 11 years in the district. She has served as the ALMS assistant principal for the last two years.

Maiocco said assuring continuity and support for the middle school is imperative, which is what made Roberts an ideal choice for the role. Roberts had interviewed for the Rocky Heights Elementary School principal position earlier this month, which went to candidate Jerad Farley.

“After her strong showing in the Rocky Heights Elementary School principal interview process and proven track record for success, I believe Ms. Roberts to be a great fit for the ALMS principal position,” Maiocco said in a press release.

Renovations needed at Sandstone, Highland Hills

BY MAEGAN MURRAY
HERMISTON HERALD

Since the Hermiston School District last contracted with an engineering firm to conduct a facilities condition report in 2006, the ratings of a couple of Hermiston school buildings have fallen significantly.

The district contracted with Mitch Crowe of Absolute Engineering last spring to conduct a building evaluations report for all five of the Hermiston School District’s older buildings, including Hermiston High School, Sandstone Middle School, Rocky Heights Elementary School, Highland Hills Elementary School and Desert View Elementary School.

Scores for each of the buildings were calculated based on exterior building conditions, interior building conditions, mechanical systems conditions, safety and building codes and provisions for handicapped status. Based on the evaluations, Hermiston High School and Desert View Elementary don’t require any renovations, receiving ratings of 84.5 and 93, respectively. With the other schools however, the news wasn’t as good.

Sandstone Middle School and Highland Hills Elementary School reported scores of 58 and 57.5, respectively, out of 100 total points possible, indicating that major renovation is needed at both schools. Rocky Heights reported a score of 63, indicating minor renovation is needed.

“I wish it was better news,” Deputy Superintendent Wade Smith told the Hermiston School Board during their last meeting earlier this month. “The summary he provided was eye opening to say the least.”

At Sandstone, the report details that the roof is leaking. The school also has a number of doors and hollow metal frames that have rusted, including spots where people can push a finger through, Smith said.

Additionally, the school still has its original heating and cooling unit, and, even though it is currently working properly, its age is cause for concern. The system is meant to last 20 years before a replacement, but it is 21 years old this year, Smith said. The age of the system also poses problems for maintenance.

“Many of these are freon-filled that we can’t even refill because of environmental issues now that we are having to deal with,” he said.

Smith said Crowe told him, because the heating and cooling units have not been replaced and have reached their maximum age recommendation, they will start “dying on the district left and right.” The district, Smith said, doesn’t have the resources to replace every unit when that starts happening.

“Every rooftop unit is \$3,000 to \$4,000,” Smith said. “You simply can’t do that out of a general fund

budget.”

The heating and cooling system at Highland Hills is also a concern.

“It looks like it came out of a World War II battle ship, but that is what it is,” Smith said. “That is the original 1982 heating and cooling unit that we are still kicking along and keeping alive here at Highland Hills. (Crowe) was really concerned about that. It is not a matter of if, it is when that system is going to completely die. What is the district going to do to replace that system?”

At Rocky Heights, the school’s rating actually improved from 2006, but that was because Smith said the district replaced a roof that had “blown off” and a pressure tank from the boiler that had exploded. He said insurance covered the roof repairs, but the district had to dig into its maintenance reserve fund to replace the boiler system.

“We tapped into the maintenance reserve pretty heavily to spend six figures on a new boiler system for heating Rocky Heights,” he said.

Smith said most of the schools requiring renovations may look nice on the outside, but the problems stem from the inside.

“These are things that you don’t see from the street,” he said. “When you drive by Rocky Heights and Highland Hills, they sure seem to be maintained nicely, but when you start opening up the attic, looking at the heating and cooling structure and different things, that really brings (these things) to



MAEGAN MURRAY PHOTO
Water leaks into a staff room at Sandstone Middle School Tuesday morning. A leaky roof is one of the many issues that maintenance and facilities employees at the district have to deal with at the school.

the forefront ... This brings you to the reality that I think provided us with kind of a ‘wow’ factor.”

The building report will serve as background information that the district will use for future planning, Superintendent Fred Maiocco said.

“It is one piece of information among many pieces of information that will go into ultimately the board deciding on which directions we go as a district,” he said. “That is still a ways out.”

Smith said the report just highlights the district’s building structural challenges.

“That is something that the board is going to have to wrestle with in the coming years as they try to prioritize and come up with potential solutions that this community may



MAEGAN MURRAY PHOTO
Maintenance and facilities employees in the Hermiston School District have tried to fix leaks in the Sandstone Middle School roof, but, at some point, something further will have to be done.

or may not be willing to support long-term for the district,” he said. “The groundwork has been laid. We’re never going to be shy of information in this district. It is just going to be how do we respond to some of the information as presented will be the biggest challenge.”

To view the full report, visit <http://hermiston.k12.or.us/community/facilities-master-planning/committee/reports/>.



MAEGAN MURRAY PHOTO
Sandstone Middle School operates with its original 21-year-old heating and cooling system. The system, while currently operating sufficiently, was only meant to last 20 years.

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