Building plans move ahead for new school

District to seek $99.7 million for new campus

By R.J. Marx
Seaside Signal

The architects say they should have a site plan for a new school campus in Seaside by the end of this week.

Meanwhile, campaign team members are working on new components for the website, Seaside School District Superintendent-emeritus Doug Dougherty said Friday.

Citing dire need and tsunami risk, Dougherty presented a proposal for a $99.7 million bond Thursday, Sept. 1, for a new campus for all the schools. Members of the Seaside School District Board of Directors unanimously voted to bring the resolution to voters in the November election.

"I'm really happy we're moving forward," board Chairman Steve Phillips said after the meeting. "We have pared down to the actual needs of the district rather than the wants."

Dougherty said there are four schools in the state in the tsunami inundation zone. Three of those are in the Seaside School District.

Gearhart Elementary School, Broadway Middle School and Seaside High School were built with an expected lifespan of 45 to 50 years. Each has been used beyond that span. "The schools are currently unsafe, they are deteriorating and they're very inefficient," he said.

At Broadway Middle School, students are in structures with unreinforced masonry, aging utilities, cinder block construction and walls torn by horizontal shearing.

Gearhart Elementary school's gym is riddled with dry rot and "would collapse in an earthquake," Dougherty said. Leaks are so bad in the 68-year-old school, "It's pretty much like playing whack-a-mole, where you are pretty sure the leak is not coming directly from the spot it's leaking from. Often it's many feet away and trying to track it down is very, very difficult."

At Seaside High School, classrooms are water-damaged and pipes covered with asbestos. Mold fills storage areas. An oil boiler is inefficient and must be "patched together" to remain functional. On rainy days, leaks quickly fill large garbage cans — "everything from slow drips to streams of water."

A 2013 district bond issue asked for $128.8 million to fund a new campus and would have required $2.16 per thousand dollars of assessed value for property owners. That measure failed at the polls.

DANNY MILLER/EO MEDIA GROUP

Seaside School District Superintendent Sheila Roley speaks during a special meeting Thursday held to discuss the upcoming bond for Seaside schools.

DANNY MILLER/EO MEDIA GROUP

The audience listens as the Seaside School District Board presents information about the new Seaside school bond.

The new bond equates to about $1.35 per thousand, a 37.5 percent total reduction in cost from the previous bond.

A proposed auditorium was eliminated to reduce costs, as were plans to rebuild Seaside Heights Elementary School. "The board heard the message when it was defeated last time," Phillips said prior to the board vote. "People were concerned about that price."

The new bond was "looking at what we honestly have to have, not just as a safety factor for our children, but to replace deteriorating buildings that are starting to cost the district money that we don't have." Phillips said. "I think people will understand we're looking at things we really need, not just a wish list."

Q&A

Dougherty looks beyond the bond

Seaside Superintendent-emeritus Doug Dougherty answers questions about the $99.7 million bond the School District Board of Directors decided to put to the voters in November.

By R.J. Marx
Seaside Signal

DANNY MILLER/ EO MEDIA GROUP

Former Seaside School District superintendent Doug Dougherty presents information about the current state of Seaside schools. The Seaside School Board held a special meeting to release the upcoming Seaside school bond.

Q: Given the mold and asbestos you've described in Seaside schools, what is the health risk for students as the school year beings?

Doug Dougherty: We have had the mold tested. It is not at a level that would cause great concern. The mold was in a storage area. It wasn't in the classrooms. The lead pipes have been encapsulated for years and decades. They're perfectly safe. We have had asbestos people who specialize in that come and periodically check that as well.

Q: When will the plans for the new school campus be available?

A: We met with the architects, the firm Dull Olson and Weeks, on Friday. It could be a few days or it could be a few weeks.

Q: Do you intend the new facility to act as an emergency shelter?

A: Yes. We'll have a structure where we'll be able to house people in. It will be built to stay safe to stand in a 9.0 earthquake. The only level higher is for hospitals.

Q: What are the schools that would be moved out of the tsunami inundation zone?

A: Gearhart, Broadway Middle School and Seaside High School.

Q: In the 2013 bond plan, you were originally going to close Seaside Heights Elementary School. What will happen to that school?

A: We are adding an addition to Seaside Heights Elementary. … That will help the additional students that will be coming from Gearhart Elementary School.

Q: How many students will the new campus hold?

A: It will hold 1,700. We currently have 1,550 students.

Q: Will the middle school and high school be separate?

A: They will be fairly close to one another for efficiency purposes. It will cost us less for us to be able to do that.

Q: What will happen to the old schools?

A: Those will be sold whenever the board decides they want to sell them. That money could go to an auditorium or could be sold. I believe most of those areas are zoned residential.

Q: If this school bond doesn't pass, do you have a Plan B?

A: Sen. Ron Wyden came to me and said the relocation of Seaside schools is a matter of life and death. I have all types of scientists basically concurring that the schools need to be moved soon, for that reason. That's only part. The other part that's very important for our community is to understand the current conditions of our current structures. Those are crumbling. In the last five years, we've had to spend an average of $300,000 a year in emergency repairs per year because buildings are structurally deteriorating.

Q: Are you a paid consultant?

A: I'm doing this as a citizen. I'm still working for the school district. But I am off hours at this time.

Q: If this does pass, do you see federal involvement and state involvement more likely?

A: I've been here 15 years trying to get federal and state monies. Sen. Wyden and Sen. Merkley had two $10 million requests for us. Those didn't go anywhere. There's still currently money out there school districts all over the state can access, that we cannot access because our schools are in tsunami inundation zone. I get a lot of support from legislators, from our senators, (U.S. Rep.) Suzanne Bonamici, everybody, but the problem is, accessing those funds has been very difficult for them. Am I optimistic? Do I hope? I hope there are additional funds. But we need to move forward.

Q: If the voters approve the $99.7 million bond, will there be hidden or additional costs?

A: What we have been told, of all the school projects this architectural firm has done, they've never gone over budget.

Cannon Beach Academy updates school district

Academy aims for approval without conditions

By Lyra Fontaine
EO Media Group

In order to qualify for grants and gain more financial security, Cannon Beach Academy needs the Seaside School District's approval of its charter application without conditions, school leaders said.

The conditions can be addressed during contract negotiations after the charter approval, Cannon Beach Academy stated in an Aug. 19 message.

"If you have an approved charter, versus an approved with conditions charter, you have an exponentially better chance of getting grants and awards," the academy's interim executive director Ryan Hull said at the August district board meeting. "What that doesn't do is remove things that you want us to be held accountable for."

Cannon Beach Academy can apply for Oregon Department of Education charter school implementation grants that will be available in spring. Seaside School District expects to resolve the charter application before the grant application period, Superintendent Sheila Roley said.

"I think we as a board see the urgency of getting those things done," district board member Steve Phillips said. "It sounds like we are on the same page and moving forward."

The academy met with Roley prior to the board meeting.

"We've been in good communication and trying to move to the best outcome for all of our kids," Roley said.

The district approved the academy in October under conditions, such as that the school would serve at least 44 kindergarten and first-grade students in its first year. In March, the district withdrew conditional approval, stating that the academy fell short on funding, enrollment and a state-approved English Language Learning program.

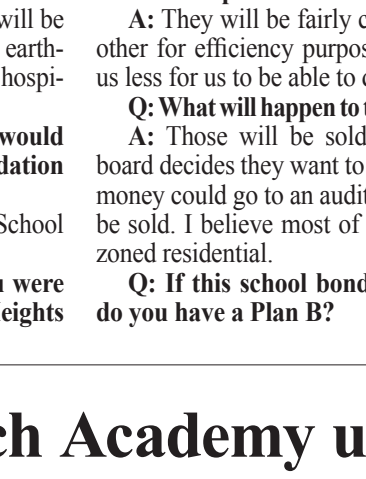
The academy will be working closely with the school district in the next few months, including going over budgets for K-1, K-2 and K-3 options, academy board president Kellye Dewey said.

Cannon Beach Academy is currently working to re-submit its application with revised sections.

"Our goal is to work together and be part of the district," Dewey said.

An enrollment update would likely happen early next year, Hull said.

Cannon Beach Academy also announced that it has raised $10,000 through community donation jars in local businesses and redeemable bottle collections.



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