

School board told jr. high school building should be vacated now

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collected over the last three years, including engineering reports, long-term operations and maintenance costs, and the evaluation of instructional and curriculum needs. Birr emphasized repeatedly that the committee unanimously affirmed that a bond amount of \$25.5 million represented the best opportunity for the district.

The committee also found "that much of the Banks Junior High School facility is no longer safe for our children and faculty" and recommended that the board immediately implement seismic structural improvements or **"that the oldest structures of the junior high school be vacated immediately and no students or faculty allowed within."** (Emphasis is in the committee letter.)

The committee also proposed a new alternative, allowing a reduced bond request of \$19.6 million. In the new proposal, junior high school students would move into the existing high school facility after minimal mitigation of critical safety issues in that building. Following the relocation of students and demolition of most of the existing junior high facility, the district would build a new high school. This plan meets all space requirements of both junior and senior high programs, though high school students would need a temporary facility during a two-year construction period.

The FPC did not recommend this alternative, because an additional bond would be necessary "likely costing more than the original \$25.5 million" in the

near future. The first report, finalized in December 2007, concluded that both junior high and high school buildings should be replaced. In 2008, engineering reports and recommendations supported the same conclusions. Now, FPC concludes that "the combined expenses to repair, upgrade and maintain the two schools would be far greater than the combined cost of building and maintaining new structures over their estimated lifespan."

No major renovation at either the existing high school or elementary facilities is included in the \$19.6 million. The board would have to prioritize safety mitigation projects, including seismic and security issues for those buildings. Vicki VanDomelen, an elementary teacher and member of the FPC,

said that the public needs to understand that correcting structural deficiencies identified by engineering consultants does not make the building "safe" [particularly in the event of a major earthquake]. Seismic mitigation is intended only to allow people time to get out of the building with minimal injuries. Damage to the building would probably prevent approval for continued use.

Lively discussion about the possibility of passing a bond for the original amount (\$25.5 million) ensued. Board chairman Duanne Lundsten asked members of the FPC, who were at the meeting, for their personal opinions regarding the possibility of passing a bond for \$25.5 million. Pete Edison, whose wife Kathy is a member of the board, was firm in his opinion that the bond would pass in May if a professional campaign manager was hired. He said that the public is concerned about the safety of the buildings. FPC member Ron Frank was less enthusiastic about presenting the same amount, but felt that a "repackaged" bond should be on the ballot in May. The state allows the district three attempts to pass a bond. If voters fail to pass a bond on the third attempt, the district is required to wait at

least two years before presenting another bond.

In other business the board:

- Learned from district business manager Simon Levear that the current transportation contract with Shafer's Bus Company extends until 2013. The 1977 (typed & carbon copied!) contract has never been revised, though revisions could be advantageous for both parties.

- Encouraged Jennie Compton to pursue plans for replacing the softball equipment shed with a more substantial multi-use building that would include restrooms. However, Lundsten told her, "make sure all costs were covered "...cause we don't have any money to give."

- Heard the annual report for WSC Insurance from Amy Hanson.

- Approved modifications to the school calendar that have been endorsed by both the certified and classified staff: January 26 and March 12, previously non-student in-service days, will be instructional days for all students; the last day for students will be June 12; the end of the first semester is moved to January 29.

- District property has been expanded by the addition of property next to the post office.

6th International Soup Festival, Jan. 31

The sixth annual International Soup Festival, hosted by the Banks Community Foundation, will be held Saturday, January 31, from 3:00 to 7:00 p.m. in the cafeteria of Banks Elementary School.

The festival includes all-you-can-eat soup and dessert as well as musical performances by John Deegan, Larry Lee, Rex Bryant and the Bare Soul Band. Many soups will be offered representing cultures from around the world. Selections this year include: wonton, egg flower, Italian tortellini, tortilla, and Hawaiian chili. Both hummingbird and chocolate

cake will be served.

Advance tickets are \$8 for adults and \$4 for children. Tickets at the door will be \$10 for adults and \$5 for children 6-12. Children 5 and younger are free. Contact Cathy Louie at 503-324-5713 for tickets or other information.

The Banks Community Foundation is a non-profit organization committed to enhancing cultural, social and economic development in the Banks community. The soup festival is a major fund raiser for this organization.

Last year, the foundation worked to get the new play

structure purchased and installed in Greenville Park. The foundation is continuing to work on this project by seeking contributions for benches and tables. Another major project for the foundation is establishing a community calendar on its website, Banksfoundation.org. This website should be live by the time of the festival and will eventually feature event information from organizations throughout the community. Information about how to be a part of the website will be available at the festival.



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