

SUMMARY OF THE FACILITIES STUDY PROCESS THROUGH MARCH, 2013

PREPARED BY TAMMY GIACOMAZZI

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In 2008 the school district established a facilities study committee comprised of district employees, community members and a consulting architect. The committee's first task was to review the district's current facilities and projected facilities needs. This was accomplished by completing a Study and Survey of the district's facilities as recommended by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). The study and survey is an overall analysis of the school district's facilities, educational programs and plans, student population projections, capital finance and operating capabilities and identification of needs for new construction, modernization or replacement of facilities. The state provides funding to school districts for this process on a six year cycle.

Using the results of the study and survey, the committee compiled and prioritized a list of the district's needs and wants. With this list as a guide, the consulting architect drew up initial plans for facilities improvement. These plans included a new Commons/cafeteria area with a new kitchen, four new locker rooms, six new elementary classrooms, a student lounge for the High School, a new Middle School wing, a weight room/exercise facility in the basement, and the complete modernization of the elementary school. The total cost for these improvements was estimated to be about \$12 million.

At this point, the facilities committee was expanded to include additional community members, and a series of informational community meetings was held. The two main concerns which surfaced were the overall price of the project and the lack of a track and field facility.

For over a year, the expanded committee explored the various options, searching for the right balance of need versus cost. Eliminating every component that was not absolutely necessary, the committee arrived at a modernization plan which had a price tag of just under \$8 million. This plan was presented to the community for comment. The committee also presented an alternate plan for \$10 million, which added a new \$2 million sports facility to the modernization.

After receiving community input on the two proposed plans, the facilities committee recommended to the school board in the fall of 2012 that the modernization alone be put to voters, with the understanding that the sports facilities needed further study. At a November 20, 2012 Board Meeting, the board voted to place the \$8 million modernization bond issue on the February 2013 ballot.

The facilities committee's work was done for the time being once the board voted to place the measure on a ballot. A citizens bond committee, which had been active in soliciting community comment on the proposed plans, began to campaign in support of the bond measure. Though there is some overlap in membership, the citizens bond committee functions independently of the district and the district facilities committee. They discussed using social media such as Facebook, print media, YouTube videos, signage, voter registration drives, and community

meetings as ways to get the message out to voters. Ultimately the bond committee used banners, an insert in the Leader, a direct mail flyer, a voter registration table, and last minute phone calls to voters in an effort to get out the vote.

With just under 50% of voters turning out for the special election, the bond measure received 405 votes for and 295 against. In order to reach the 60% necessary for approval, 420 of the 700 votes cast would have been needed.

At the regular school board meeting the week after the election, 15 community members and students were present. Several voiced their disappointment that the bond had failed and encouraged the board to run it again. Although schools are limited as to the number and frequency of levy elections they can rerun, bond elections may be rerun as often as schools deem necessary, given the higher approval margin required. After much discussion, the board voted to hold a special meeting to vote on a resolution to place the bond on the April special election ballot. The consensus was that with fewer than 50% of voters participating and over 57% of those who voted approving, the board did not have a clear mandate to abandon the modernization project.

On February 27, 10 community members were at the special board meeting. Many opposed placing the bond measure on the April ballot. They felt that the amount of the bond was excessive and should be scaled back. The board invited those community members to join the facilities committee and suggest areas to eliminate. Following discussion, the resolution died for lack of a motion by a board member.