



BOARD BRIEFS

Authored by the Davis School District Community Relations Department

Board forms local building authority for new school

Action allows immediate construction of elementary to alleviate crowding

Members of the Davis School District Board of Education donned a different hat Tuesday to accomplish something never done previously — at least in the district.

Operating under new bylaws and as new trustees of a Local Building Authority (LBA), the Board unanimously approved the issuance of \$40 million in bonds for the design and construction of a new elementary school on the corner of approximately 4500 West and 400 South in West Point.

That move also means the proposed boundary change will not go forward. In the special business meeting, the Board unanimously denied the proposed boundary change for West Point and West Clinton elementary schools. The original proposal was to remove an area that housed about 92 students from West Point Elementary’s boundary and place it in West Clinton Elementary’s boundary.

District Business Administrator Craig Carter outlined the alternative funding option for the Board during an earlier meeting April 19. The Board was told of the option to form an LBA, which then has the authority to issue the necessary bonds. Carter explained the district would pay for the lease revenue bonds through its existing capital budget. He added the district could only shoulder one project through this lease revenue bond option, rather than mul-

multiple projects.

Typically, the district uses voter-approved general obligation bonds to build schools in areas of high student growth. All projects from the last general obligation bond approved by Davis County voters in 2015 have been built. The earliest another general obligation bond could be put on the ballot is this November.

With the LBA-issued bonds, the district can begin construction on a new elementary almost immediately. The construction of an elementary takes at least 18 months.

In the meantime, District and school administrators along with representatives from the district’s Facilities Management Group will look at temporary adjustments that can be made at West Point Elementary to alleviate the issues caused by overcrowding.

Those adjustments may include extra personnel, moving additional temporary portable classrooms on site and the reconfiguration of spaces used for prep time classes — music and art. If growth continues, a temporary move to a year-round schedule may also be considered.

Elementary School Director Dr. Gwen Hill said the adjustments will not include moving the full-time special education classrooms from West Point Elementary.

During Tuesday’s meeting, board members applauded the community for its civility in working with the District and Board of Education in finding a solution.

District outlines preliminary construction bond wish list

In other action Tuesday, the Board of Education was presented a 2022 Preliminary Bond Project Wish List that totals \$430 million in construction projects.

District Business Administrator Craig Carter explained as the district looks to the future, it has areas of growth as well as preestablished areas where schools need to be replaced.

The wish list includes the re-

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build of two of the oldest schools in the district — Sunset Junior High and Bountiful Elementary schools.

Anticipated growth in the county calls for the possibility of con-

structing a new junior high school in West Point and a new elementary school in the northwest part of Davis County.

Remodels of various sizes also could be considered at Bountiful, Clearfield and Layton high schools, Kaysville Junior High School and Burton and Vae View elementary schools.

The list also included numerous air conditioning projects slated for auditoriums and gyms that have no

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Board considers preliminary budget of \$960 million

District Accounting Administrator Tim Leffel provided board members a glimpse of the district's final legal budget for the current fiscal year and the preliminary budget for fiscal year 2023, adding the board could consider adopting it at its June 7 meeting or wait until later in the month. By law, it must be approved by June 30.

He explained the district has \$650 million in its general fund. Next year's total district budget could be \$960 million. He added the district has made a lot of progress in the last three years to increase teacher salaries.

Leffel said the district was also the recipient of federal American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (APR ESSER II and III) fund grants and has spent about half of that funding. Those grants totaled \$60 million.

He added, "We always talk a lot about, 'How much of our money do we spend on people who affect students everyday?' We are proud to say almost 90 percent of every dollar goes to pay people, and or supplies, and or things that we need that affect students every single day."

Board member Cheryl Phipps stated some people have advocated the district "should stop taking federal monies so the federal government doesn't have as much say in things that we are doing."

Leffel explained the district projects about \$65 million coming from federal funds — \$20 million being COVID or ESSER funds. "Usually we are in the \$40-plus million. The biggest participants in that would be Special

(Education), Title I and free and reduced lunch. ... Those are targeted at at-risk students."

Phipps then asked, "Does taking those federal monies allow the federal government to be directly watching over all of our funding or specifically those federal funds?"

Superintendent Reid Newey responded: "No, that doesn't allow for that. There are obvious safeguards because they want accountability for the funds that we get. But it's reports, ... and we would love for reports to disappear. I've never, ever seen federal funds be tied to anything that it's reported to be tied to. Never. Not monitoring, not erroneous requirement. Nothing that doesn't directly help students."

Board President John Robison, a retired teacher, school administrator and Healthy Lifestyles department head, added that he received periodic calls from individuals who believed if the district received federal funds that it would dictate what the district taught students regarding human sexuality.

"That's not the case," Robison said. "What we have to remember is that what is taught in our schools is determined by several entities, but they are local, like the Legislature in particular. The state board sets standards ... and what happens in Utah is determined by Utah.

"Those kinds of things do not take place just because we take federal funds. They don't mandate what we teach."

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AC, the development of three junior high school tracks and turf fields in the south, central and north portions of the county, and the need to acquire land for future school sites.

Lastly, the list contained line items that involved the replacement of school kitchens, windows, Big Toys, restrooms and tracks, as well as energy system upgrades.

Carter added the projects on the list are not currently prioritized.

"A lot of it depends on cash flow," Carter said. "As old debt (is paid off), we issue new debt, so we are trying to keep the rate and our payments constant. Certainly right now, our two pressing needs are the junior highs in Sunset and West Point."

Superintendent Reid Newey

added, "This isn't necessarily a priority list. That's a bare bones list.

"One of the things I think the board needs to be aware of is that we've had great facilities management," Newey said, "We firmly believe that educational space is best used and enhanced by the space kids meet in, and to get behind in that orientation is extremely costly and dangerous, particularly with the financial environment that the economy is in at this point.

"So this is something that we've really worked at paring down ...," he added.

Carter explained his team has been working with officials at Zions Public Finance to see how such projects could be paid for while keeping the existing tax rate where it currently

sits. Early estimates are that the tax rate could remain the same even if the projects totaled about \$450 million.

"Our debt position has improved quite dramatically," Carter said. "We've been able to pay off some debt, and with the growth in the district, our debt to what we can issue has dropped from almost 50 percent to about 25 percent."

He said the district is also in the process of receiving input from focus groups in an effort to provide board members information on how the community views the proposed projects and projected costs.

The Board took no action on the matter and expressed appreciation for the information.