

Wayne County Board of Education approve funding for important facility projects across district

The Wayne County Board of Education approved a variety of necessary improvements to several school building facilities during their monthly meeting in January.

Facility Coordinator Justin Alley explained that much thought had gone into how the valuable ESSER funds (known as COVID money) could be spent in regard to the facilities. “We want to get the biggest bang for our buck and these projects are amongst the most urgently needed upgrades that meet the funding criteria. This is a one-time opportunity, so we want to use it in smart ways,” he explained.

The district already used a portion of this funding on instructional needs, while another portion is already dedicated to the high school gym for mechanical and electrical renovations. Those renovations are scheduled to be completed by the fall.

The board started the ball rolling on these other improvements by approving a \$4 million BGI for an indoor air quality renovation project at Bell Elementary. This will lead to a new HVAC system, replacing the 25-year-old-plus system, fully funded by the ESSER money.

Additionally, these funds will replace the upstairs seating in the high school gymnasium at around \$50,000. The company that manufactured the original seating which turned out to be flawed due to UV issues, is providing a discount. There is not a mechanical issue with the seating, however, it has become brittle and the seats need to be replaced.

The Pickrell Auditorium seating at the high school which is 30-years-old will use the ESSER funds to replace the fabric that has dry-rotted. They will spend \$100,000 to replace all the seating with new seating.

The board also discussed and approved a guaranteed performance contract for energy savings after an audit by Energy Optimizers. Justin Ost, representing Energy Optimizers, provided the board with a detailed plan outlining conservation measures that will significantly reduce the electric load and improve the facilities overall.

Alley explained that this project will replace the 30-year-old water source heat pumps at the high school, retrofit all lighting in the district to LED, upgrade Bell Elementary’s kitchen and replace the Bell Elementary roof. Along with the new roof, federal incentives will allow solar panels to be installed on the roof at very little if any cost, greatly reducing the electrical bills.

“This project uses savings to pay for more than half the cost. Money that would otherwise be paid for electric or fuel costs will now upgrade facilities instead,” said Alley. “I am very excited about these upgrades. This is essentially a \$7 million project that will actually cost \$3 million.”

They board also agreed to declare the AJ Lloyd Building on South Main Street surplus property. A local group and government officials believe funding has been secured to re-purpose the building into a community venue for the future.

At the start of the meeting:

*Board member Jarrod Criswell and newly elected member Joe Hancock were sworn into office for their new term.

*The board voted unanimously for Larry Muse as chairperson and Melissa Upchurch as vice-chairperson.

*The board will continue to meet on the third Thursday of the month at 6:15 p.m.

*The board members were recognized for their service to the school district during KSBA's School Board Appreciation Month.

*Local seniors actively enrolled in the WC Area Technology Center were recognized for their involvement in the SkillsUSA program. Dawson Piercy, past and present president of the local organization shared information on their activities. He congratulated Cole Crabtree who succeeded at the national level of competition in auto mechanics. Next month, ATC students will be focused on the first level of the 2023 competition in a variety of areas.

*The board gave their nod of approval on the Nutrition and Physical Activity Report. Casey Holt, director of the school nutrition program, explained updates to their program that are underway.



Board members Jarrod Criswell and Joe Hancock were sworn into office by school board attorney Gordon Germain



Energy Optimizers Account Executive Justin Ost presented an Energy and Facility Performance report that was approved



WC ATC Senior Dawson Piercy sharing information about SkillsUSA



Dawson Piercy received a certificate of appreciation from Board Chairman Larry Muse



WC ATC Senior Cole Crabtree spoke about his auto mechanics experience at national competition held in Atlanta



Cole Crabtree was congratulated by Board Chairman Larry Muse