



January 2, 2014

KFCS' District Newsletter

By Paul Hillyer, KFCS' Superintendent

"There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children."

-Nelson Mandela in a May 8, 1995, speech in Pretoria, South Africa

Does the condition of our aging school buildings tell us that the community has put off renovation and/replacement of buildings for too long? The newest school building, Ponderosa, was built 54 years ago. Virtually all the other school buildings were built between 85 (Roosevelt) and 95 (Mills) years ago. Fortunately, we now have a chance to begin addressing this situation. KFCS's Board of Directors decided to support a KU remodeling project as the first step in a long-term facility improvement plan.

Choosing to ask the community to support renovating KU rather than building new was based on two critical factors. One is the price tag. To build a new 950-student high school would cost over \$60 million dollars. Renovating, right sizing, and remodeling what we already have costs about half. The school board feels the price tag to build new would be too high. They also feel that such a cost would make it difficult to address other pressing facility needs in the future.

The second factor is a thorough renovation project will extend the life of the building by 40 or 50 years. These improvements will effectively redesign the structure's interior to create a safe and contemporary facility using modern design principles. This allows for the creation of a 21st Century learning environment. Such an environment will lead to higher rates of learning and graduation. It will also be a school on which the students, parents, staff, and community can look with pride.

What will this project cost? Though a final proposal is still in formation, it will likely be about \$30 million. Should the community indicate a desire to provide extra dollars for technology and replacement of old and failing components of the district's elementary schools, the cost would be about \$35 million.

Regardless of the final proposed amount, the board is committed to using a stair step financing approach. This is what the Bend-LaPine district and others in the state have used over the last decades to replace multiple schools over time.

What this means is the majority of the 20-year loan would be paid in the first ten years. Higher payments would be made in the first ten years than in the last ten. Such an approach reduces the interest liability incurred by the bond issue. It also presents an opportunity ten years into the bond for the community to consider addressing the needs of other aged buildings that will be 95 to 105 years old at that time.

Depending on the total loan amount, the cost to the taxpayer would be between \$1.30 and \$1.50 per thousand dollars of property the first ten years of the loan. This would drop off to between \$.76 and \$.86 per thousand in the last ten years. Thus, a homeowner with a \$100,000 home would pay an additional \$130 to \$150 dollars in taxes per year during the first ten years and \$76 to \$86 per year in the last ten years.

This proposed investment in our children and our community will allow the district to remove currently unused, and largely unusable, areas of the high school. It would build a new second gym that would double as a performing arts space. It would also allow for the replacement of all old and decrepit plant systems such as heating, roofing, windows, ventilation, electrical, and plumbing. Virtually all the interior space would be modernized while adding more vocational learning and laboratory areas. Another goal is increasing building safety by creating seismic reinforcement throughout the building. Also improving safety, would be the moving of the offices and the main entry to the same side of the building. All visitors would check in at the administrative area before going into the rest of the school. Finally, this project would clean, beautify, and improve the classic outside facade.

This article will close with a few questions to guide the reader's thinking on this bond proposal:

1. Do our children deserve the same learning environment as students in the rest of the state and nation?
2. Do our youth deserve a safe environment in which to learn and grow?
3. Do our young people deserve an attractive, comfortable, warm, and well-ventilated school?
4. Does the community need an appealing and modern central high school about which to be proud?
5. Does Klamath Falls need a centrally located showcase high school to demonstrate the forward thinking necessary to attract new businesses and families to the area?
6. In sum, does Klamath Falls want to thrive or just survive?

The answers to these questions can help our community determine whether they wish to support the school board proposal given above. Reflecting on the Mandela quote can also help lend perspective to this decision.

Other News:

1. In order to get information out on the KU proposal, a citizens' group is forming. There will be subcommittees in the following areas: Finance, Program and Outreach, Publicity and Communication, Registration and Get Out the Vote, and Social Media. If you have an interest in leading or helping in any of these areas, please respond to this email and someone will contact you.

2. The school district received exciting news last week. It has been awarded a \$177,000 mentoring grant to help connect students with positive adult role models. KFCS partnered with Citizens for Safe Schools in the writing of this grant. Special thanks to Citizens for Safe Schools Director, Debbie Vought, who did the bulk of the work in this effort.
3. Please forward this email to anyone else who might be interested in this information.

May 2014 be the best year yet for you and your family!