

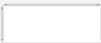
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CC-Crystal school board looking at multi-million dollar millage

By Cory Smith • Last Updated 11:21 am on Friday, November 15, 2013

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Tower Pinkster's design architect Matt Slagle shows Carson City-Crystal Area Schools board members where

potential areas of renovation and expansion could take place at the Lower Elementary School if a proposal to accept a multi-million dollar project is approved. — Daily News/Cory Smith

CARSON CITY — When one peeks at the horizon of what could be in the future for the Carson City-Crystal Area Schools district, an enticing list of improvements begins to reveal itself.

A new gymnasium? Additional classrooms? Technology and equipment upgrades?

All that and more could be coming to the Lower Elementary and Upper Elementary, Middle School and High School Complex buildings if voters give the go-ahead in May.

At Monday night's Carson City-Crystal school board meeting, a presentation was given by representatives from Tower Pinkster Architects and Engineers of Grand Rapids as well as Schweitzer Construction of Battle Creek.

The two businesses are working together to create a plan that would see major renovations and possible additions to the district's two buildings.

According to Superintendent Kevin Murphy, the district is hoping to move forward with a plan to extend the current 2 mills for two years' bond (\$2 on each \$1,000 of taxable valuation) that is set to expire in December 2014.

"We're not looking to increase taxes," Murphy said. "If you're living in our community, we're just looking to extend the term. We're looking to explore 2 mills for 10 years or 2 mills for 12 years.

Murphy said an extension to that extent would generate between \$8.5 and \$10.5 million to work with toward renovating and improving the schools.

According to Schweitzer Inc. President and CEO Tom Beuchler, the current estimate for the total project will vary on which plans the district decides to pursue.

Lower Elementary

An initial plan for the lower elementary building would include site improvements, a new entrance canopy, improved accessibility, building shell improvements, new floor covering, interior door replacements, minor ceiling repairs, fire alarm upgrades, upgrades to the kitchen and upgrades to electrical and plumbing systems.

Combined with an allowance of \$400,000 for technology and \$300,000 for equipment, the proposed conceptual budget would be \$3,315,000.

However, a second budget was presented by Beuchler that would include a complete renovation of the existing facility as well as 8,500 square feet of additions as conceptually presented by Tower Pinkster.

The conceptual budget for that project is \$5,242,000, with an option to include a new \$6,500 square-foot gymnasium, which would bring the total estimate to \$6,412,000.

According to Tower Pinkster's senior principal architect Steven Hoekzema, the new plans are an attempt to create better circulation throughout the school, creating hallways that connect classrooms throughout the school, making travel throughout the building easier and more convenient for students and faculty.

Hoekzema said currently there are students who now have to travel through adjacent classrooms in order to reach restrooms.

"This concept really addresses some of the major issues we've been hearing about the building," Hoekzema said. "There are disruptions in classrooms because kids have to walk through classrooms to get to the bathrooms. The cafeteria/gymnasium really is a big corridor right now. And everyone circulates through there to get everywhere." The new plan would focus on creating a hallway plan that would help students to make their way through the building a more convenient experience.

The presentation was met with positive reaction from both teachers and parents in the audience during the meeting.

"As a teacher, I love that plan," said kindergarten through third-grade teacher Julie Farmer. "It's gorgeous."

Tony Brown, a parent whose daughter is in the sixth grade, was also pleased with the future plans laid out for the district's buildings.

"That's the best plan I've seen for our elementary in the 20 years that I've been here," he said.

Upper Elementary, Middle School and High School complex

A third budget was presented by Beuchler in relation to upgrades at the Upper Elementary, Middle School and High School complex.

The plan would include addressing storm water issues in the courtyard, improvements to drainage and irrigation at the football field, a trash enclosure, parking lot repairs, improvements to accessibility, a new elevator, approximately 29,000 square feet of roof replacement, repairs, waterproofing to masonry and foundations, upgrades to interior finishes, electrical and plumbing systems.

Combined with an allowance of \$500,000 for technology and \$250,000 for equipment, the proposed conceptual budget would be \$4,792,000.

Beuchler said a conceptual budget for renovations to the complex has not been created at this time as conversations

are still ongoing as to proposed revisions to the existing layout.

“There’s still a lot of discussion still on what direction we want to go with the high school, so we haven’t developed a budget for renovations or additions,” Beuchler said. “We developed a budget to take care of needs that were addressed in the facility assessment study.”

Beuchler stressed that these are conceptual numbers and are likely to change.

“These numbers are going to go up and down as we continue to go through the design stages,” he said.

School board member Gregg McAlvey said he was very pleased with what was presented before the board during the presentation.

“I really like the direction that we have on the elementary (school),” McAlvey said. “I think it’s pretty obvious that we’ve got a good plan. I like what Tower Pinkster has brought on the high school as far as ideas. We’re still putting that picture together and I think we’ll get a pretty good idea on the design here shortly. I like the direction we are heading for sure.”

Looking for community input

School board members will meet again at the Dec. 9 meeting to finalize a plan with input from teachers, administration, parents and residents. Murphy said he is looking to create a focus group to meet and discuss the plans before moving forward.

“If you are interested as a community member to sit in on a focus group, please give me a call,” he said. “It doesn’t matter if you are a “no” or a “yes” for this. What matters is you are in our district. We want to hear from you.”

Murphy added that the most recent improvements from the current 2 mills over two years bond included middle school and high school mechanical upgrades, a conversion from steam to hot water, and a boiler replacement. He added that a remaining amount of approximately \$250,000 from that bond, originally intended for additional bathrooms, has been saved for the future renovation projects.

“That money is still in the bank,” he said. “We have not spent it at the high school or anywhere else. The rational is, we want to be good stewards of the money.”

Once a plan is approved by the district, a campaign will begin to inform voters of its details.

Voters will eventually make the decision whether to approve an extension of the current bond in order to pay for the planned renovations and improvements throughout the district during an election in May.

About the Author



Cory Smith

Cory is the current Belding beat reporter for The Daily News, as well as the multimedia reporter, producing video and photo content for the paper's website. Cory is a hometown kid, having graduated from Greenville High School in 2004. He then went on to study Journalism at Michigan State University where he also played trumpet and marched as a member of the Spartan Marching Band for four years.

Cory Smith has written 498 articles.



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In a crowded conference room, with no chair empty and many residents standing, with those who were last to arrive poking their head through the entryway door, the Carson City-Crystal Area Schools Board of Education met Monday evening in what became a heated discussion over the district's curriculum and reaction to several recent newspaper guest editorials and letters to the editor.

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Although the Carson City-Crystal Area Schools Board of Education originally approved plans to add to restroom facilities to Carson City Elementary School, questions over the timing and the cost of the project have proved insurmountable at this time. The school board voted 6-1 on Wednesday to reject a bid for restroom renovations. Board President Tom Wilcox cast the lone dissenting vote.

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