

The public is invited to the next Perkins County Schools Board of Education meeting on Monday, June 10 when a decision will be made on how to move forward with the district's three facilities.

By Jan Rahn

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Patrons attending a recent school board meeting were given the opportunity to ask questions and express opinions during the public comment portion of a meeting focusing on the future of the facilities.

"I can appreciate that this is a very emotional issue for members of the community no matter which option is selected by the board," said Perkins County Schools Superintendent Tobin Buchanan.

The board of Perkins County Schools will make a decision at the June 10 board meeting on two options.

"I am confident that while there is no way to know all answers to every component of the issue at this time, the board has been diligent in researching and establishing good information on which to base their decision," said Buchanan. The very things that make Perkins County great, like pride in our communities, makes this an emotional and difficult decision for those involved."

The majority of those present at the meeting held in the high school gymnasium on May 13 were opposed to the option of vacating the middle school.

The two options include:

Option 1 at the Madrid site includes demolition of the three-story section of the building with new construction to recapture that space.

It also includes upgrading electrical, lighting, and mechanical systems to the remaining portions of the building to make sure all parts of the middle school are within federal compliance and create a positive and up-to-date learning environment.

The estimated cost of this option, including contingencies and fees is approximately \$5.2 million.

Option 2 at the high school site in Grant includes northern expansion to include a cafeteria/kitchen area, second gymnasium, and junior high classroom area for seventh and eighth grade students.

There would need to be some remodel and upgrades to the existing facility to allow classroom access, along with upgrades to some areas to meet ADA (American Disability Act) requirements.

The estimated cost of this option, including contingencies and fees is approximately \$6.5 million dollars.

Both project cost estimates include adding sprinkler systems to new and existing construction, as required by law.

Facility Study

Over a year ago, the board of education took the first step in taking a hard look at the future of Perkins County Schools' three building sites.

Short and long range planning and goals were established for maintenance, interiors, exteriors,

and mechanical systems.

The board entered into a contract with BD Construction of Kearney to help sort out two potential options to especially address the middle school facility in Madrid.

The board has shared all findings, costs and architectural plans with the public at open meetings both in Grant and Madrid, in addition to mailing letters to all district patrons to inform them of the process.

“I think the public has asked some great questions and I appreciate their comments and concerns,” said Buchanan. “I hope they feel that we have been responsive in trying to provide additional information or clarify information presented.”

Facility Improvements

Since 2008 the board has been improving and maintaining the three facilities. At that time it was pointed out that the 1921 three-story portion of the middle school was obsolete and required extensive remodeling or demo and new construction.

Middle school upgrades over the past five years have included window replacement, roof repairs, flooring, lift certification, window air conditioning, plumbing and paint.

Improvements at the high school during the past five years have included flooring, window/door replacement, tuck pointing, heating and air, roofs, electrical and concrete.

Study Begins

A power point presentation at the recent meeting informed the public on why and how the board moved forward with a facility study.

- With identified projects complete or nearing completion, it was decided in February 2012 to announce to the public that the board would begin a formal process of evaluating long range district needs. This was in regards to investments in upgrading the middle school site or leaving the middle school site and upgrading the high school site to accommodate students.
- A design team consisting of architects, engineers, and construction management were selected to assist in this process.
- The goal of the board was to gather as much information as possible to aid in decision making.
- The facility study was an agenda item on almost every board meeting from then until now.
- Public informational meetings were held in February 2013 to share with the public the information gathered to date.
- Since the public meetings the superintendent, board, and design team has attempted to gather information for themselves and the public in response to board and public request for additional information.
- This information has been shared with board members, any member of the public who has requested it, and is available on the website.
- The board felt it had enough information to consider a decision so it was advertised that an agenda item regarding the two options may be on the June agenda and the public was encouraged to come to the May board meeting for more information and the opportunity to share opinions, concerns, and ask additional questions.

The bottom line for the decision facing the Perkins County Board of Education is, “Which option is in the best interest of the students and school district for the future?”