

CENTER 26 JT SCHOOL DISTRICT EXPLORES OPPORTUNITIES FOR STATE GRANT FUNDING

A state assessment of the Center School District's aging facilities show a need for serious capital improvements in the district. Through the State of Colorado's Building Excellent Schools Today Program (BEST) program the district may be eligible for significant grant money from the State. For the past two months the District has been soliciting input from the community on potential solutions to the problems of its aging facilities. Public forums have been held at district facilities in order to determine a plan of action, and to hear from its constituency on proposed solutions.

What is the Problem?

An assessment was done by a team assembled by the Colorado Department of Education (CDE), Capital Construction Assistance Program. The team identified serious deficiencies exist that contribute to health and safety issues (the highest priority), limitations on the educational environment, high operational costs, high maintenance costs, and high consumptions of energy. Health and safety issues are the most significant concern.

How Can the District Access Money?

In 2008, the Colorado legislature passed the Building Excellent Schools Today program (BEST) to provide financial assistance to school districts that need significant capital improvements that would otherwise be unable to afford them. The Center School District plans on submitting a BEST grant application in April of 2010 to address capital deficiencies. These deficiencies are in the \$13M-20.6 million range according to CDE's Facility Assessment and the project team's review. State law only allows the District to issue 20% of its bonding capacity, or about \$4.77 million in the case of the Center School District, which normally would limit the District's ability to fund significant capital improvements. Through the BEST program, the State would cover the remaining costs of a proposed solution. This means the local taxpayers could pay for less than a 20% of the overall cost! If the District were to be awarded a BEST Grant, receiving this State money would be contingent upon a matching money bond election of approximately \$4.77million to be held on November 2nd, 2010. If the election fails, the State money would go to another School District.

What is the proposed solution?

Representatives from The Neenan Company have worked with the school board, district staff, and community members to identify five possible solutions. These Master Plan solutions are as follows:

- Completely Renovate the Existing Facilities
- Renovate Haskin Elementary into a PK-12 Facility while Demolishing the Current Middle/High Facility and Retaining Some Buildings

- Build an Entire New PK-12 Facility on a New Site while Abandoning Most Current Buildings
- Build an Entire New PK-12 Facility on the Existing Site then Demolish Most Current Buildings while Retaining the Auditorium, Wrestling Facility, and 1990 Gym
- Build an Entire New PK-12 Facility on the Existing Site while Abandoning the Haskin Building on Site

The board decided to pursue the option to build an entire new PK-12 facility on the existing site then demolish most current buildings while retaining the auditorium, wrestling facility, and possibly the 1990 gym.

How much will this option cost?

According to the District's master plan, cost estimates for building a new PK-12 and renovating the buildings to be retained range from 25.4 – 31.7 million dollars. However, the Center School District's share of the projects costs would be approximately \$4.77mm, due to the District's debt limitation.

What would my tax impact on a 4.77million dollar bond issue be?

The cost to district residents for such a project would be as follows:

- Residential: Approximately \$7.62 per month per \$75,000 home value
- Agricultural: Flood: Approximately 81 cents per acre per year- SAGUACHE COUNTY
- Agricultural: Sprinkler: Approximately 95 cents per acre per year-SAGUACHE COUNTY
- Agricultural: Flood: Approximately \$1.20 per acre per year- RIO GRANDE COUNTY
- Agricultural: Sprinkler: Approx. \$1.36 per acre per year-RIO GRANDE COUNTY

The District Needs Your Input!

The District feels that the unique financial opportunity offered through the BEST program to upgrade facilities for less than 21 cents on the dollar is too important to pass up. Another public forum is scheduled for Tuesday March 9th at 8 PM when the Board of education meets. Those who desire to communicate in writing can also send a letter to the Board of Directors, Center 26 JT School District, 550 South Sylvester, Center CO 81125. Communication by email can also be sent to Superintendent George Welsh at gwelsh@center.k12.co.us.

The school district is working hard to provide the best facilities and education possible for the children of our community. We encourage everyone to become involved in this

effort. This opportunity has the potential to improve the appearance of our community, provide long overdue upgrades to our educational facilities, provide further recreational and adult educational opportunities to our patrons, attract new families, and, thereby, stimulate our economic growth and development of our community.

In 1918 the Center community came together to build a K-12 school facility. In 1948 and again in 1960 community residents dug into their pockets to provide brand new dedicated high school and middle school facilities. In 1971 district patrons once again provided funding needed to upgrade the original K-12 building. It has been several generations since the Center community has been asked to seriously address the condition of its school facilities. We believe the District has been blessed with a wonderful opportunity to do this for pennies on the dollar and we ask you to offer your input and support in working toward this end.

Sincerely,

The Board of Education of Center Consolidated Schools