

8/4/22

Bond Project Update: Joint School Board and Bond Oversight Committee Meeting

To honor the responsibility and commitment Alsea School District (ASD) has to quickly communicate accurate information to the public, there will now be brief status updates of Alsea School Board (ASB) and Bond Oversight Committee (BOC) meetings posted on the school website for our constituents to read soon after each public meeting. Visit the bond or board tab on the website to access these updates or links to official minutes of the meeting, which will still be posted after approval on the school website board or bond tab. After the new school Facebook page is operational, you will find updates and links to official minutes there as well.

A joint public work session of the ASB and the BOC was held on August 1st to discuss how to best utilize the funds entrusted to the Alsea Bond Project (ABP) by the taxpayers of ASD. This meeting was followed by a special meeting of the ASB to discuss the recommendations of the BOC. The BOC had their regular monthly public meeting on August 3rd. As always, public attendance at these meetings is welcome and encouraged either in person or virtually, with opportunity for public comment. Community members who wish to comment at the meeting can sign up to do so through the school website board page or in person before the meeting. ASB and BOC will most likely schedule second monthly joint meetings for as long as necessary to facilitate implementation of the ABP.

ASD has about 4.5 million dollars available for the bond project including matching funds from the state, \$474,000 of unappropriated district funds dedicated to the ABP, and \$163,000 in ESSER III funds specifically dedicated to air quality enhancement through the HVAC improvement. Bids for the APB are coming at 1/3 to 2 times what was anticipated as recently as April 2020. BOC member Richard Olsen verified that bids at OSU maintenance are coming in much higher than expected as well. In addition, both Derek Howard of CB Construction (CBC) and Richard reported that subcontractors are only willing to honor bids for 30 days due to the skyrocketing cost of materials.

CBC also reported that they are having trouble finding subcontractors. The possibility of ASD hiring their own subcontractors was presented and discussed. This change would require the district to initiate an entirely new bidding process and then oversee management of the ABP. The committees thought it better for the school to focus on educating students than overseeing a construction project of this size. BOC member Richard Olsen was able to provide a list of subcontractors to CBC to facilitate locating local companies. CBC is willing to serve as electrical subcontractor and is in process of ordering the needed electrical equipment for the project. CBC could also serve as subcontractor in the areas for which they are licensed if needed but are not licensed in all areas of this project.

Interim Superintendent Sean Gallagher reported on his research into canceling the ABP and returning the funds to taxpayers, which would cost the district a minimum of 2.5 million dollars. "We have to keep in mind that third party investors have already purchased the bonds that the district sold on behalf of the voters," says Sean Gallagher-Superintendent, "The district has to meet those investment obligations regardless."

CBC and Scott Marshall of Straightline Engineering had several suggestions for lowering the cost of the project and will present the ASB and BOC with cost estimates iterating how removing or simplifying plans would reduce the cost of the ABP. Reducing the scope of the current project would still allow for necessary improvements like new electrical and HVAC while also putting in place infrastructure for future expansion of educational programs at Alsea School. Brainstorming lead to great solutions like

creating a Career and Technical Education (CTE) curriculum that would have Alsea Students do the interior finish work for the Vocational Education Building (VOC).

Current status update follows:

- The permit for the ADA upgrade at the PreK plan was issued 8/2/2022 by Benton County Works Department.
- The completion of the necessary ADA access to the PreK building will start August 8 by district maintenance crews and Benton County Public Works crews, with costs shared by Benton County Public Works.
- Groundbreaking for earthwork for the VOC by Hughes Excavation (formerly ED Hughes) is slated to start August 8.

Pending updated numbers from CBC and Straightline Engineering, the BOC will recommend and ASB will approve the scope of project as delineated by the re-prioritized list of projects presented on April 12, 2022. Plans are prioritized as follows:

- Electrical power service upgrade with new panel room and HVAC system, both of which are absolutely necessary. The old boiler has boiled its last oil. Installing the new HVAC requires the electrical upgrade, since the school is currently operating at over capacity for the existing electrical panel.
- Completion of the VOC as a shell finished at least to the ability to use.
- At this point, the BOC and ASB can work with CBC and Straightline Engineering to determine what portion of the remaining ABP funds to direct to the completion of the VOC building and the new cafeteria/kitchen complex.

The content of this article is intended to bring community members up to date on the ABP. Future updates will hopefully be shorter and loaded with good news of lots of progress as we embark on this exciting investment in the future of *Alsea School, It's All About the Kids!*

Please direct inquiries and comments to the Public Information Office for ASD, Sara Cash, at sara.cash@alsea.k12.or.us or 541-487-5667.