

ELBERT SCHOOL DISTRICT EXPLORES OPPORTUNITIES FOR STATE GRANT FUNDING

A state assessment of Elbert School District's aging facilities shows the need for serious capital improvements. Through the State of Colorado's Building Excellent Schools Today program (BEST), the district may be eligible for significant grant money from the State. The District also wants input from the public on potential solutions to the problems of its aging facilities. Public forums have been held at district offices in the past several months in order to determine a plan of action. The District plans to hold a public information session in conjunction with the Spring Concert on March 16th @ 7:00 pm to present the latest information and to hear from its constituency. Plan to come and support our exceptional youth and learn about the future of our school.

What is the Problem?

An assessment of our current facility was done by a team assembled by the Colorado Department of Education (CDE), Capital Construction Assistance Program. The team identified serious existing deficiencies that could contribute to potential health and safety issues, limitations on the educational environment, high maintenance costs, and high consumptions of energy. Health and safety issues were the most significant concern, which falls in line with CDE's prioritization for the grant.

How Do We Get 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. Elbert School District plans on submitting a BEST grant application in April of 2010 to address their capital deficiencies. The district cannot afford to build a new school on its own. Whether we fix our current facility or build new it will cost the tax payers the same amount. State law only allows the District to issue 20% of its bonding capacity, or about \$3.5 million, 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 the proposed solution. This means the local taxpayers will only pay for approximately less than 15% of the overall cost! The state money will be contingent upon a bond election of approximately \$3.5 million to be held on November 2nd, 2010. If the election fails, the State money will go to another school district.

What is the proposed Solution?

Representatives from Slater Paull Architects have worked with the school board, district staff, and community members to identify three possible solutions. These solutions are as follows:

- Option A – remodel the current facility and bring it up to code at an estimated project cost of \$20,800,000

- Option B – build a new facility at our current site on the north end of the property at an estimated project cost of \$21,600,000
- Option C – build a new facility adjacent to the football/baseball complex at an estimated project cost of \$24,150,000

At the January 26th School Board Meeting, the board voted unanimously on Option B as the facility to pursue for the BEST application.

How much will it cost? Regardless of project size, the Districts share will be approximately \$3.5mm

- Residential: Approx. \$10.67 per month per \$100,000 home value
- Agricultural: Dry-land: Approx. 30 cents per acre per year
- Agricultural: Grazing: Approx. 9 cents per acre per year

Proposed Timeline:

- April 2010 – apply for BEST grant
- July 2010 – Hear from the BEST Board if we were awarded the grant funding contingent on passing the bond
- November 2010 – bond election
- Spring 2011 – begin construction
- Summer 2012 – move into the new facility

The District Needs Your Input!

The district feels that the unique financial opportunity offered through the BEST program to get new facilities for less than 15 cents on the dollar is too important to pass up. Again, there will be a public information session in conjunction with the Spring Concert on March 16th @ 7:00 pm. Those who desire to communicate in writing can send a letter to the Board of Directors, Elbert School District, PO Box 38, Elbert CO 80106. Another avenue for participation is at the School Board meetings held on the fourth Tuesday of each month. Community members are welcome to share their thoughts at the beginning of the meetings during “Audience to Visitors.” Speaking time is limited to five minutes for individuals and fifteen minutes for groups.

The school district is working hard to provide the best future facilities and education that we can and do expect for our children. Please get involved in this effort. It has the potential to improve the appearance of our community, provide long overdue upgrades to our educational programs, provide recreational opportunities to our patrons, attract new families, and, thereby, stimulate our economic growth and development.