

Board Meets in the Middle, Endorses Preliminary Plans, Seeks to Fill \$700,000 Funding Gap

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At the regularly scheduled Board Work Session on Monday, August 27, 2012, Interim Superintendent Wade Smith and members from the Kennison Renovation Committee presented preliminary site plans and renderings for Board review. A landmark event, the presentation represented the three month culmination of a significant amount of work, including numerous committee meetings, program input sessions with architects, substantial research, site visits to other complexes, and dozens of stakeholder input and feedback interactions.

Smith presented the committee's work, which outlined three different facility models based on scope, priority, and need identified as the "bare-bones", "mid-level", and "enhanced" options, for Board review and consideration. The "bare-bones" option, with an estimated price tag of \$3.3M, was quickly dismissed by the Board, as it failed to meet the program needs identified by the community. Lacking sufficient amenities for senior and disabled citizens, safety considerations for athletes and guests, a concessions facility, and appropriate field and spectator features to support the ability to host state-level competition and events in Hermiston, both the Board and Committee concurred that the community would not be satisfied with the entry-level facility. The most expensive option, the "enhanced option", represented a complex featuring significant improvements and features, but yielded an estimated price tag of \$4.8M. This option results in a funding gap of \$1.6M from the current \$3.25M of available resources identified for the project, which includes district, Booster Club, and preliminary identified in-kind support. The Board agreed with the Committee that this model was outside the budget scope.

Concluding with the "mid-level" option, coming in at an estimated \$4.0M, the Board unanimously endorsed the program. According to Board Chairwoman Karen Sherman, "the mid-level option identified by the Kennison Renovation Committee represents a compromise between facility needs and responsible financial stewardship. This moderate option provides all of the necessary amenities to meet our student and community needs, while offering us the opportunity to host state-level events in Hermiston. The new facility will help to alleviate the necessity for Hermiston, and all student athletes in eastern Oregon, to always be forced to travel to the valley to play in a facility that meets OSAA requirements; it will also serve as a significant economic benefit for our community as we look forward to the possibility of hosting regional and state events in Hermiston."

Interim Superintendent Smith outlined the \$700,000 funding gap between current resources and the "mid-level" project estimate. "A Kennison Renovation Fundraising Committee has formed and met numerous times," noted Smith. "We have procured the services of a grant writer, identified and submitted for grants, and developed a six-tier sponsorship platform for corporate and personal donors."

In order to ensure the construction of the mid-level project, the \$700,000 gap must be filled by January 1, 2013, as construction is set to begin early winter 2013, for a grand opening target scheduled for August, 2013, prior to the first home football game. "We have spent considerable time developing a Kennison Renovation and Fundraising website at www.hermiston.k12.or.us for interested community partners to learn about the project and how they can become involved in the fundraising and donation efforts," outlined Smith. "I am already amazed from the preliminary financial support pledged from local businesses, corporations, and patrons."

The committee has outlined sponsorship opportunities ranging from "Diamond" Level \$100,000 donor opportunities to \$100 support as "Friends of Bulldogs" and has developed a permanent Donor Wall, which will be constructed on site to recognize donors and their contribution levels. Potential naming rights to the renovated stadium was also fast-tracked with the generous support of the Eastern Oregon Trade and Events Center Board, as they offered to include the Kennison Renovation Complex in their contract with the Superlative Group, a company specializing in feasibility studies for facility sponsorship. Nate Rivera, a representative from the EOTEC project, was present to share with the Board its generous inclusion.

Over the next two months, Smith and members from the Kennison Committee will present the preliminary plans and fundraising opportunities to the greater Hermiston community through service organization and similar presentations. “All of our research, data, and preliminary drawings are available for community review on our website,” noted Smith. “We have included feedback opportunities for stakeholder input and look forward to receiving comments as we continue to refine the complex to meet student and community needs.”