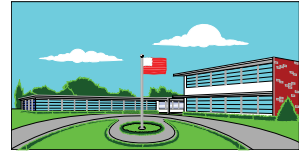


This Week



IN FLORENCE PUBLIC
SCHOOL DISTRICT ONE

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Board Discusses the Need for New Schools

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Editor, The News Journal

Florence, S.C.

The Board of Trustees of Florence District One has been talking about its future facilities plan this past week. Community meetings were recently held at each of the district's high schools. In order to build new schools to relieve overcrowded classrooms and get rid of the too-many mobile classrooms, the board is considering "pay as you go" bonds.

Currently the district is using 182 portable classrooms at its 21 schools throughout the district. West Florence, with 20 units, Royall with 19, and Delmae with 16 units, are so crowded with portables that the back of their campus resemble a mobile home park.

The biggest problem is these separate classroom units make school security difficult, according to Florence One Superintendent Larry Jackson. "The health and safety of our children is a major concern for me," he said, adding that this overcrowding is primarily a safety issue.

The average life of a school building is 30 to 35 years, but more than 13 of the district's 21 facilities are over 39 years old. Seven of them are more than 50 years old, he said. Royall, built in 1949 is the oldest school in the district. Recently, the ceiling in one of its classrooms caved in and fell down. Luckily, it happened after school hours, so no one was hurt. Constructed with wooden rafters, the school would not make code today, noted Jackson.

School enrollment for Florence One has increased by more than 2,200 students in the last nine years. The last schools constructed were Carver Elementary, 14 years ago, Sneed Middle School, 16 years ago, and Wilson High, 27 years ago.

Five years ago, an external review team was brought in to determine the education adequacy of each school facility. Factors evaluated included instructional space, cafeteria and media space, school site and location, student capacity and health safety conditions, among others. At that time the lowest grades went to Moore with a D+ and Beck (the old Carver school) received an F. The district average was a C.

The good news is the board has a plan.

"This is the first time the board has a mechanism in place for managed growth," commented Jackson. The plan includes a Phase I, Phase IA, and Phase II. Phase I is to build a new school to relieve overcrowding at Carver and Delmae Elementary Schools. Currently those schools have a total of 1,658 students and 30 portable teaching stations.



S. Porter Stewart
Chairman,
Board of Trustees



Larry L. Jackson,
Superintendent

(continued on back)

Board Discusses the Need, *continued from front*

Phase IA would be to build a new Moore Middle School on the same site as the new elementary school. These two schools would be constructed on a 170-acre parcel of land which is owned by Florence One and located between Hoffmeyer Road and Old Ebenezer Road. There is enough space at that site to build a new high school when needed. The new elementary school is expected to cost a little more \$17 million and the middle school estimate is a little more than \$20 million.

Phase II of the plan is to build a new North Vista Elementary School on a site to be determined with input from the North Vista community, and a new Royall Elementary School on the old Moore Intermediate School site. The newer parts of Moore and the gym might be salvaged to become part of the new elementary school, Jackson said. With these additional schools, the Florence One system would become more uniform—all elementary schools would house grades K through five, middle schools would house grades six through eight, and high schools would house grades nine through twelve. In the current situation, some students attend a kindergarten through fourth grade school, a fifth and sixth grade school, a middle school, and a high school.

Just recently, the school district purchased the old McClenaghan High School building which could later serve as the building for adult education, community education, and Florence One Administration. That would free up Poynor School which could be used as a Performing Arts School, partnering with Francis Marion University. The current Administration Building could become a technology center, possibly partnering with Florence-Darlington Technical College. “These plans are necessary kinds of things to position ourselves for the future,” said Stewart. Jackson said the board has already approved the funding for the site work for a new elementary school and new middle school and also approved the concept for Phase I, Phase IA, and Phase II.

There are two ways to finance the construction of the new schools. For example, a general obligation bond for \$125 million to be paid back over a period of 30 years would cost \$104 million in interest. A “pay as you go” bond could bring in \$422 million in 30 years with each bond maturing after two years, costing \$4,100,000 in interest. Interest costs would be minimized because no bond would bear interest beyond two years and the district would be debt free after the two year bond maturity.

Board Chairman Porter Stewart commented that the district is eligible for “pay as you go” bonds because the school district has been very careful and frugal in spending and is as healthy financially as any school district in the state. “Nobody else in the state is in the position that we are in and we ought to be proud of this,” he said.

With the bond issue, property tax increases would add \$26 on a home valued at \$50,000, \$78 on a \$150,000 home, and \$156 on a \$300,000 home. Owners of commercial property valued at \$100,000 would see a \$78 tax increase and owners of commercial property valued at \$1,000,000 would see a \$780 tax increase.

“We’ve squeezed our facilities as much as we can and now it is time to take the steps to address our children’s needs,” Stewart commented. □

Coming Soon to a Website or a Local Channel Near You

In order for our internal publics to be aware of the specifics, there will be a videotaped production of **Superintendent Larry Jackson** providing an explanation of the current building and facility needs in Florence One Schools. This videotaped program will provide an opportunity for all staff members to receive the information which was provided at recent community meetings held at South Florence, West Florence, and Wilson High schools.* Within the next week, plans will be made to stream the production via the Florence School District One website as well as to air the production on Channel 11, the local Government Access Channel. The Office of Public Information will release the specific details of the availability of this upcoming production in the very near future.



*Questions & Answers: Please see the attached list of frequently asked questions and answers compiled for the recent community meetings which were held at South Florence, West Florence and Wilson High schools. □