

NEOSHO DAILY NEWS

By Dave Horvath

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Neosho school board approves junior high bid docs

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“We consider these documents 95 percent complete. We are going to finish them up and are going to put them out on the street,” Eric McCune, architect and project manager for Sapp Associates in Springfield, advised the R-5 school district board of education Thursday.

“Instead of having a special meeting when they (plans) are 100 percent complete, we authorized him to go ahead with the bidding procedure once those documents are finished,” said Brett Day, school board president. “The bid documents will go out, and hopefully we’ll have a lot of construction companies looking to bid to build our junior high.”

Bids will be opened at 7 p.m. Jan. 28. Schools Superintendent Dan Decker said McCune will ensure that all bids have met specifications. If that can be accomplished that evening, the board will vote to accept a bid at that time. Otherwise, the board may call a special meeting a week later, he said, depending on how much information must be disseminated.

The marquee sign that will be constructed at the entrance along Kodiak Road will need its own power source, McCune noted. He projected the sign will be 12 feet wide and 6 feet tall. With input from the board, he will seek to add a two-sided, 12-foot by 6-foot memo board.

Keith Rook, assistant junior high principal, assured the board that all facets of staff have had multiple meetings with architects to ensure all of their concerns and suggestions have been satisfied in the creation of the designs.

School grants

Grant Coordinator Amanda Robbins reported on recent grants for the district and others she is working to implement.

Robbins noted the Dec. 10 visit to the district by members of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), the Walmart Foundation and the Midwest Dairy Council, entities responsible for the implementation this year of universal “grab and go” free breakfast in all schools.

“After viewing the breakfast models, the funders met with the district breakfast committee, where Miss (Sharon) Adams-Taylor (of AASA) spoke highly of the district’s efficiency of the program and complimented the evidence support on all levels from administration to food service, custodial and, in particular, the classroom teachers,” Robbins said. “AASA and the Walmart Foundation were pleased to see that, as they visited the classrooms, students – even at the kindergarten level – were able to eat

breakfast and begin daily activities as normal.”

The program funders also applauded the district for significantly improving daily participation rates of students who eat breakfast in every building, some whose participation grew by as much as 85 percent in one month.

“Because of the district’s dedication to the breakfast program, Neosho will be featured in January’s issue of ‘Quality Counts,’ an educational advertorial focusing on the importance of school breakfast programs,” Robbins said.

Neosho is one of 11 schools nationwide that received the grant to begin the breakfast program this year that Decker said includes districts with as few as 1,000 students to the Chicago Public High School system of about 250,000 students.

Walmart funds most of these programs, but Decker said a foundation representative previously never visited a site, only perusing data. Angela Collier was impressed with what she saw in Neosho’s schools. “When she left, she said, ‘Of all the data I’ve seen to this point, and actually getting to see it run and the efficiency with which it was run in the district,’ she said, ‘You guys have been by far the best district,’” Decker said. “To me, that’s a tremendous compliment, and it goes to the very beginning of the grant whenever we wrote it, the planning and then just the orchestration of it.”

Decker lauded Robbins and food service Director Shelly Johnson for leading the successful program. “Neosho is on the national map,” he said. “We will be in the annual superintendent’s publication (AASA), so it will be all across the country that we are efficient in what we are doing for kids. I think that’s awesome.”

Other active grants include a November award of \$75,000 to allow the purchase of modular playground equipment for Benton and Central elementary schools. Robbins expects the installation of those to be completed over the holidays.

Pending grants include for STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) education activities at South Elementary, a soft grant for South aquaponics systems, an eco-tech grant for Benton Elementary to acquire multiple aquaponics systems, a Benton grant for after-school activities and a district-wide grant for garden supplies.

Robbins is working to apply for a special services grant to benefit early childhood and will begin to draft an after-school program for all elementary schools and the middle school for a 21st Century Community Learning grant. She also is working to secure funding in support of the district’s Literacy Initiative.

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