

Planning for the future

Growing Maize school district considers expansion

By Devan Horning

School district officials and community members have developed a plan that could lead to new facilities at Maize High and elsewhere in the district.

The planning facility committee was scheduled to present its plan to the Board of Education Monday night. The board now must decide if it wants to proceed with the plan and ask voters to approve bonds to pay for the construction and upgrades.

"A decision won't be made by the board until January, so that gives us some time to do some surveying of our community," Superintendent Doug Powers said at a Nov. 19 facility planning committee meeting.

The committee has identified multiple areas of need: middle school, early childhood, athletics, safety and transportation, and career education.

"We came up with some pretty crazy ideas, 13 different ideas were discussed," a committee member said. "A third middle school is most beneficial."

The estimate for the plans presented Nov. 19 was about \$83 million. However, some items were scaled back before Monday's school board presentation to reduce the overall cost. The last bond issue was approved in 2007 \$58.9 million.

"I didn't see anything that was really wants," Powers said. "It was truly needs, so it becomes a matter of prioritizing."

The most expensive would be adding a new middle school and upgrading Maize Middle School at a cost of about \$35 million. Location of a new middle school hasn't been determined. However, the school district in 2010 purchased land at the corner of 45th and 119th streets near Maize High in anticipation of future growth. Work at Maize Middle would include classroom improvements, adding lockers and a new gymnasium.

"We want to bring it up to today's standards," a committee member said of MMS.

The next big thing is finding a permanent home for the Early Childhood Center. The center has moved twice, never into its own building. The center needs to be in a centralized location convenient for parents and with a flexible workspace. Each class requires a therapy space, and more classrooms are needed for school growth.

A group with an excessive amount of needs is the athletics department.

"We've never put athletics in a bond issue, so we'd have to see how the community responds to that," Powers said.

A big item in the proposal is a multi-purpose facility, similar to a YMCA, that the schools and the community could use. It would include a pool for the swim teams.

"Everyone in our group said we need a pool in Maize," a committee member said.

The facility could generate income by being rented out and hosting events. District schools could use the center for P.E. classes or to teach lessons.

Stadium improvements are needed at both high schools, the committee found. A new soccer facility and a two-sided press box is part of the plan at Maize High. Media classes would be able to use the press box.

"This is not extravagant," district activities director Marc Haugh said. "This is the needs of where our district is at right now."

Other items part of the athletics proposal at Maize High include new locker rooms and training rooms closer to the football field, new lights at the football field and moving the bleachers close to the field to improve the game-day experience for fans.

"We make Maize one of the premier districts in the state," a committee member said. "We do it in the classroom; we need to do it in the athletic areas."

Maize High is the only school that doesn't have a designated FEMA shelter. It needs to hold 2,400 people. The high school also needs a bus drop-off area with a hall extension and a special needs changing room/restroom.

The transportation facility, which is currently on 53rd Street, needs more space. Because of the size of the property, there is no room for improvements, which gives no easy fix. The fuel center is in the middle of the property and the speed bumps are not good. The facility needs room for 75 buses and 35 vans with room for growth.

"I know it's hard to justify spending in nonstudent areas," a committee member said. "There are a lot of safety issues with your transportation facility."

The Career and Professional center is the last group that was evaluated.

"Gov. Brownback has been very supportive of the career and tech-ed movement," a board member said.

The district now has 31 pathways after adding the culinary arts program. Brownback promised two years of funding for the programs, trying to encourage students to leave high school with a certificate that would provide a decent job for the future. The state will pay \$1,000 to students when they complete a pathway. The goal is to provide the career pathways program with its own stand-alone facility. The goal is to provide students a place to learn these things in their own school environment so more students will participate.

"There is always one draw back when it comes to choosing classes," a committee member said. "Students don't want to leave campus." ■

The school district owns this land at 45th and 119th. New facilities could be built here if the bond issue is passed.

PHOTO BY DEVAN HORNING

Drug bust rumors: checking on the *facts*



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY MATTHEW POGUE

As of Nov. 26, eight to 10 students were searched for drugs and suspended for drug usage, three to five students were caught storing illegal drugs in their car, and no students tested positive for random drug testing.

Botts confirms the truth about drug busts

By Alexis Loudermilk

A rumor quickly spread among the student body on Nov. 2 that the Maize administration hired students to attend parties and report back when students did something illegal.

The media attention was at its peak. Power 93.9 tweeted about it numerous times. A reporter from KSN Channel 3 News called the central office seeking information and staff from surrounding schools called to see what was going on.

“It spread quickly into a lot of different places, and it was all inaccurate information,” principal Chris Botts said.

Botts said the school has no interest or time to snoop on students’ Twitter accounts on a daily basis. However, he said administrators will look in to it if information regarding bullying or talk of drugs is turned into the school. Students flaunting the selling or usage of drugs will be on the radar.

Botts said it’s absurd to think Maize would use funds to pay informants, especially when considering the budget constraints the school district is under. If there was extra money, it would be used for educational purposes.

DRUG USE EFFECTS

Bowles Center for Alcohol Studies has proven that short term health effects from drug use include the possibility of headaches, vomiting and alcohol poisoning. Long term physical effects may include weight gain, cancer, disease, heart or respiratory failure, alcoholism and death. The highly addictive nature of drugs proves that once you start, it’s increasingly difficult to stop. The effects of poor decisions regarding drug use will hurt students later.

Source: University of North Carolina

“Even if I had a billion dollars, I would not pay someone to go to a party and be a snitch,” Botts said. “It’s just not what we’re about.”

“In life, no matter what it is, use your own brain. Don’t just automatically think it’s true. Be an individual thinker.”

Question everything. Make your own decisions. Look at the facts.”

Maize is, however, actively involved with discouraging drug use among students in other ways. Drug dogs were implemented last year in addition to the random drug testing that has been in place for years. Unlike the privacy of random testing, drug dogs are a public, visual reminder of the consequences that result from bringing drugs to school.

Students who refuse to sign the random drug testing agreement, test positive or are caught bringing drugs to school are excluded from extracurricular activities, suspended or expelled.

As of Nov. 26, eight to 10 students were searched for drugs and suspended for drug usage, three to five students were caught storing illegal drugs in their car, and zero students tested positive for random drug testing.

Botts said one of his big goals is to create a climate where every student loves attending school at Maize.

“I had a great high school experience,” Botts said. “I want every person that comes here to have a good high school experience and to have good thoughts about Maize High.” ■