

Assembly Debates New School Bond

Friday, 10 July 2009

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Erik Wander/KMXT

Kodiak Island Borough Assembly members heard the school district's final pitch for an approximately 80-million dollar bond issue for a new high school at the assembly work session last night. It was the last chance for the district to make its case before the assembly votes on an ordinance to put the issue before voters in the October regular borough election.

Superintendent Stewart McDonald highlighted several key arguments in favor of a new high school. He said enrollment has exceeded the school's capacity and is projected to remain that way into the foreseeable future. He also said the high school has had to make up for the lack of space by using the community auditorium, space in Kodiak Middle School and rented space, which he said is not a sustainable solution.

Kodiak High School principal Bill Watkins discussed health and safety issues with the existing facility, saying it is suffering from what he called "sick building syndrome." He pointed out problems with air quality, lighting and acoustics. Calling Kodiak's youth "our most important resource," he also said they deserve adequate learning spaces, such as science labs, more and improved classrooms, vocational education spaces and an additional gym to accommodate physical education classes and 13 extracurricular sports.

Assemblywoman Louise Stutes re-iterated a concern she expressed at a previous meeting regarding the school district's timing.

-- (KHS
1 53
sec. "Why are we given this ...
in another year or two.")

Stutes

went on to say she believes the assembly might need to take more time in making a decision. Assemblywoman Pat Branson referred to an item on McDonald's detailed timeline in responding to Stutes' comments.

-- (KHS
2 25
sec. "There was a joint
meeting ... where we are today.")

Assemblyman
Dave Kaplan voiced his support for the ordinance and expressed his agreement with McDonald and Watkins of the need for a new high school.

-- (KHS
3 11
sec. "I agree with Principal
... we have nothing, we are nothing.")

Assemblywoman
Chris Lynch said the issue should be left up to voters to decide, but that they should be fully informed of the details. She also expressed concern.

-- (KHS
4 43
sec. "I am holding the news
... scoop to the public.")

McDonald and other
school district staff members plan to give presentations regarding the Kodiak High School project to various organizations throughout the community from July 16th through September. The assembly will vote on the ordinance, along with a roughly 12-point-five million dollar bond issue for renewal and replacement projects at its regular meeting next Thursday.

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