

Assembly OKs New KHS Bond Ordinance

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Casey Kelly/KMXT

Voters in Kodiak will decide in October whether or not the community should get a new high school. The Kodiak Island Borough Assembly last night (Thursday) voted to put a 115-million dollar bond initiative on the municipal election ballot. But even the project's most ardent supporters admit it will be tough sell. KMXT's Casey Kelly has more.

One of the top priorities of former Kodiak schools' Superintendent Larry LeDoux, now the state Commissioner of Education, was a facility review of the current high school building. The review showed that Kodiak High School, in its present state, is woefully inadequate in terms of classroom size, vocational space, safety for both students and staff, and overall efficiency of design. LeDoux himself publicly advocated for the bond initiative to pay for a new facility. But during public comment at last night's assembly meeting Kodiak resident Jim Ashford criticized new Superintendent Stewart McDonald for advocating the same exact thing.

(Ashford
1 :33s "without
any forethought.")

McDonald
set the record straight later in the meeting, when he said that plenty of past school officials, including former Superintendents John Witteveen and Betty Walters had supported the idea of a new high school for Kodiak.

(McDonald
1 :19s "to
take full credit I guess.")

On a serious note, McDonald said the project is long overdue, because the current high school facility isn't meeting the needs of students.

(McDonald
2 :31s “…we
want them to have it here?”)

McDonald admits it won’t be easy to convince voters to back the bond initiative. One thing supporters of the project have going for them is the fact that the State of Alaska will reimburse 60 to 70 percent of construction costs through a program that helps communities with new school construction. But even with that the annual property tax paid on a 250,000 dollar home to pay down the debt service on the bond will be about 1,178 dollars. However McDonald says waiting could be even more costly.

(McDonald 3 :23s “…115-million, but it’ll be
higher.”)

Members of the borough assembly agreed with McDonald’s assessment and voted unanimously to put the bond initiative on the ballot. If the initiative passes some of the bond monies will go toward converting part of the current high school into new offices for the borough, school district and City of Kodiak. Assemblyman Tom Abell said that’s part of what sold him on the initiative.

(Abell 1 :08s “…cleared for progress in the future.”)

The municipal election is October 7th, and the bond initiative will appear on the ballot as Proposition 2. McDonald says the school board has authorized him to spend about 2,000 dollars on a public information campaign about the need for a new high school. He’s also offering to give tours of the current building every Friday to anyone who wants one.

I’m Casey Kelly.

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