

Substantial Progress Made on the Jr./Sr. High School Building Project

January 30, 2012 – The countdown to ground-breaking is in full swing as representatives from the Independence Community School District (ICSD) continue to work closely with HSR Associates, the architects for the new Jr./Sr. High School. District representatives have discussed various elements of the new building with HSR including the immediate and future development of the 92 acre area, an in-depth look at the building's floor plan, exterior design, interior design, and estimated energy consumption.

Site Plan Development

On December 20, 2011, HSR Associates attended the School Board meeting to present the proposed location of the new facility on the 92 acres. The Board gave HSR direction to proceed with finalizing the draft site plan with the facility facing West, approximately 600 feet from Iowa Ave. One improvement that has been made is shifting the location of the south parking lot entrance to the center of the parking lot. The benefits of this change were that it: 1) creates a main entrance into the school with a focal point on the front entrance of the building; 2) moves the southern entrance to the new school farther away from the main entrance into MHI; and 3) reduces the length of the third lane (blow by lane) on Iowa Ave. On January 24, 2012, HSR and District Reps met with Terracon and the Civil Engineer to discuss the conditions of the soil. Discussion was held regarding the possibility of starting some preliminary earth work in early March 2012 to drain water from the site, preparing the site and soils to be a construction site and a long-term building site for the new school building. Terracon's final report with their recommendations on proper soil and site preparation was finalized this week. This will then allow the Civil Engineer to finalize the Site Plan for Board approval within approximately three weeks. HSR will be submitting the Storm Water Installation Permit for approval to the DNR, which will allow us to proceed with preparing the site for construction and bidding.

The Board also discussed the access road across the 92 acres during their early January 2012 work session. The Board decided to have the access road end behind the new school instead of continuing the road all the way across the 92 acres. A couple of the advantages to this decision were: 1) improves safety by eliminating a service / access road connecting to the parking lot at West Elementary, and 2) preserves more farm land which can be used to generate revenue for the District. The Board will continue to explore the best route for the access route across the 92 acres in the near future. The Board did agree to incorporate a biking / walking trail from the new facility to the West Elementary building. The trail will hook into the Liberty Trail, run in front of the new JR / SR high school, then wrap around the North property line of the 92 acres, East to the West Elementary building and football field.

Floor Plan

HSR, the District representatives and staff continue to develop and finalize the facility and interior room layouts. HSR is now working with the District to determine the detailed specifications for bidding. Substantial progress was made on January 24, 2012 when HSR met with the District reps to determine which aspects of the project would be included in the general bid package vs. bid separately for potential cost savings.

Exterior Design

Substantial progress has also been made with the exterior design of the facility. "One improvement that has been developed is the incorporation of an arched, translucent skylight system over the 'main street' area," said Board President Brian Eddy. The "main street" area is the common area that runs down the center of the building. The skylight system will bring more natural lighting into the building. A dark maroon / burgundy brick will be utilized on the exterior. Tan brick colors will be used to accent the maroon / burgundy color.

Interior Design

On January 11, 2012, Superintendent Peterson and Board members Eddy and Smith traveled to LaCrosse to meet with HSR to discuss interior design ideas and considerations. "We met with two interior design specialists at HSR who provided their initial thoughts on how to incorporate the school colors into the facility, the type of flooring to be used, and the exterior appearance", said Superintendent Peterson. A key consideration for interior selection is cost of installation versus cost of maintenance. The goal is to avoid extra maintenance costs and time by selecting a low-maintenance option now.

Energy Efficiency Considerations

HSR has made several improvements to the design of the facility to maximize energy efficiency. In addition, the geo-technical report from A-One Geothermal is expected to be finalized this week. HSR is working with the Wisconsin Energy Center who is analyzing the design of the facility for energy efficiency improvements. Their recommendations are expected in the new few weeks. HSR and the Board is also working on their evaluation of whether to include an alternative bid to make the facility 100% geo-thermal. The primary factors the Board will be considering when making a decision on the geo-thermal system are: 1) the anticipated payback on investment based on the Build for the Future Energy Committee's analysis; and 2) whether the geo-thermal system can be afforded within the project budget, even if the payback on geo-thermal is reasonable. On January 24, 2012, "we discussed the potential of an open-loop ground water sourced geo-thermal system that has been installed in several schools in our region in the past few years," said Board Member Eric Smith. The open loop system could provide the same capabilities of a closed loop system at substantially reduced installation cost. HSR will explore the open-loop ground water sourced geo-thermal system over the next few weeks.

Fundraising

The Build for the Future Fundraising Committee has made incredible progress with the \$6,000,000 "Bridging the Gap" fundraising campaign. At Saturday night's Mustang Foundation banquet, Rob Robinson (Chairman of the Fundraising Committee) reported that they have raised approximately \$4.75 M to date! Any savings from in-kind donations or funds from FEMA for the SAFE ROOM are not included in this figure. For more on how to make your pledge to this project, please visit the Mustang Foundation website or contact Rob Robinson today at Rob.Robinson@bankiowa or 319-334-7181.

FEMA Grant for SAFE Room

The District, with the assistance of HSR Associates and INRCOG, submitted the SAFE ROOM grant

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application in December. The grant has cleared the State of Iowa's review process, and is now under final review by FEMA. Our INRCOG representative estimated that FEMA could make a decision in about 60 days. The final grant application requested approximately \$800,000. The final determination was to make the four locker rooms the SAFE ROOM. It provides the best opportunity for cost savings and eliminated some additional issues related to having the auditorium be the SAFE ROOM.

Preliminary In-Kind Projects and Soil Testing

During December 2011, Terracon finished up their soil testing work on the site and a couple of volunteers removed some trees and the old fence line along the West property line. "Our communities that will benefit from this project can be very thankful to Lisa and Jim Duffy, the current farm tenants, for allowing us to conduct soil testing and commence some preliminary work on the site prior to March 1, 2012", said Eddy. "Their support has been instrumental in allowing this project to continue without further delays. They have been great stewards of the District's property", said Eddy.

Timeline

The site plan is expected to be finalized in mid February with DNR approval on the Storm Water Installation Plan by the end of February. The Board also hopes to make a final decision on the suitability for a geo-thermal system by the end of February as well. The tentative plans are for in-kind donors to install tile lines on the site in March to help keep the site drier during construction. Some preliminary in-kind earth work to grade the areas around where the facility will sit could also start as early as March, depending on weather conditions. HSR expects to have documents ready for bid letting in mid to late March with official ground breaking in mid to late April. HSR has noted that everything remains on schedule for completion of the facility by August 2013.

Long Term Site Plan

The Board held a work session on January 5, 2012 to review the long-term facility plan for the 92 acres. Discussion was held on future needs, such as a new bus barn, tennis courts, soccer fields and baseball / softball fields. "The school district and board remain focused on the new building and the site development required to support the new Junior/Senior high school building", said Smith. Funds from the 2011 General Obligation Bond will be spent only on the new JR / SR High School, and not on these future needs. The Board will have another work session in the future to discuss the SILO funding availability for future development of the 92 acres.

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