

MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PCSD 25 Board takes actionable steps toward the rebuilding of Highland High School

Pocatello, Idaho—A legislative proposal currently under consideration in the Idaho House could have a significant impact on the final plans to rebuild Highland High School. At Tuesday’s regular board meeting, the Pocatello/Chubbuck School District Board of Trustees opted to table taking action for a May 21 bond election pending further details on the financial impact of House Bill 521, which proposes to create a new School Modernization Facilities Fund. The financial impact of that legislation remains unclear.

Board Chair, Deanna Judy, said, “Early reports indicate the promise of this bill could help reduce a bond request or potentially eliminate the need to bond altogether.”

While early in the stages of the legislative cycle, the Board recognizes that the new state facilities fund is dependent upon passing both the Idaho House and the Idaho Senate. Despite the impending legislative outcome, the Board took action on the formation of a Highland High School Rebuild and Design Committee whose purpose will be to review and discuss various options for the Highland High School rebuild project.

“With or without new state funding, Highland High School’s needs haven’t changed. We still have a critical need to rebuild essential areas of Highland High School,” Mrs. Judy emphasized.

Since the onset of the fire, meticulous planning has been underway to rebuild and restore the affected areas of the school. While a fifty-six percent majority of the community was in favor of the November bond proposal, the final vote tally did not meet the nearly insurmountable supermajority threshold.

“We are taking the necessary steps to explore various options and make thoughtful decisions that consider both financial prudence and the imperative to uphold educational standards,” Judy said.

One option includes rebuilding Highland’s facilities to 6A standards by combining insurance replacement monies with alternative sources of funding from the district, including allocations from the Capital Improvement Program and potential property sales.

Another option is to run another bond proposal on May 21, 2024 to rebuild Highland’s lost facilities and modernize instructional, activity, athletic, and performance spaces to align with 6A standards. This option also factors in the insurance replacement monies into the financial request for the bond proposal.

The timeline for decision-making is clear. The deadline to submit the resolution language for a new bond proposal is March 22. The anticipated completion date for any of the potential scenarios the Board has under consideration, including any depending on state funding, is Fall 2027.

Several guiding goals have focused the Board’s continued deliberations, including:

- Problem-solving with a focus on the continuity of learning while delivering a high quality educational experience.
- Transparency and accountability to the taxpayer community.
- Commitment to continuous improvement to safeguard the well-being of learners and staff.
- Regular communication to keep learners, parents, staff, and the wider community informed on progress, challenges, and decisions related to the rebuilding efforts.
- Recognizing that strong public school systems are a key driver of economic development. The long-term benefits associated with investing in new facilities include improved property values, community pride, and the ability to attract and retain learners, teachers, and staff.
- Gratitude and resilience recognizing the community support received and the importance of remaining united to overcome challenges.

“We appreciate the Board’s painstaking efforts and thoughtful approach to rebuilding Highland,” said Dr. Douglas Howell, Superintendent of Schools.

“We cannot overemphasize the resilience and strength of the Highland High School community in overcoming adversity and moving forward towards a brighter future. Rebuilding these essential areas is not only a significant endeavor for the district, but for the community.”

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