

August 25, 2015

Dear Chehalis School District Staff:

During this coming year the school district will embark on capital facilities projects made possible when Chehalis patrons approved a \$36 million bond measure. We explained to patrons that the measure would fund the building of a new school and a half -- a new 3-5 grade school on the Shaw property, plus a new wing onto Olympic Elementary School, along with a remodel of the existing part of Olympic.

The purpose of this letter is to bring you up to date on this process and to let you know of a possible modification in our planning. We want our staff to be informed, and we will also share this information with the community.

Before presenting the bond measure, we had a preliminary analysis that indicated that the remodel of Olympic was cost effective. Now, however, we have hired an architect firm, which has worked with our educational committees, and together they have looked closely at Olympic. The actual costs of doing things we knew needed to be done to bring Olympic up to required building code for school buildings will be higher than was previously forecast. Some of the items that are more costly include:

- replacement of mechanical and electrical systems,
- new fire sprinkler system,
- scope of asbestos abatement,
- seismic/earthquake retrofit and ADA upgrades.

The cost of making the "old" part of Olympic functional and fit with the new addition to be built is going to be significantly higher than anticipated.

The investigation done through this process has shown that, for almost the same cost, the district can build two new schools on the Shaw property and not pursue the expansion and upgrade of Olympic. In a nutshell, it will cost about the same to build two new schools as to build one and a one-half new and to remodel the other half.

This new development gives us an opportunity to make the best use of our resources, without requesting new funding from taxpayers, and has several benefits:

- There are significant benefits to student safety and security because we would house all students on the same campus.
- Improved traffic flow would be built into the plan for this new campus, as promised, and a busy street (20th Avenue) would no longer be running between two campuses.
- The property is large enough to accommodate the two schools with adequate space for everything needed.
- Replacing Olympic with a new facility will allow for a school that will serve students farther into the future.
- Because Olympic would not be remodeled, student learning there would not be disrupted during construction.
- The projects could be done faster and more efficiently, because we would not have to work around a remodel project. The move-in dates for both new schools would be a year earlier.
- All of our elementary students would have access to all of the technology and learning spaces promised in the bond (21st century classrooms).
- In presentations to the public about the bond measure, the district explained that we may also use the Shaw property to locate a new school bus transportation center. We could use the Olympic property for this purpose instead, if we built two new schools.

There are enough potential benefits to this change in plan to merit public input and a decision by the School Board. Therefore, **a public hearing has been scheduled for 6:30 p.m. Sept. 1, 2015, at the Chehalis School District Office Board Room, 310 S.W. 16th Street.** You are invited to come and share your comments and perspective with the Board as they consider this important change. The main question is: would it be in the best interest of students and taxpayers to proceed with the modified plan to build two schools on the Shaw property?

Please let me know if you have questions. I appreciate your commitment to Chehalis students and look forward to a positive and productive year ahead!

Sincerely,

Ed Rothlin, Superintendent