

Thank you to voters who approved a 2006 bond to fund several capital projects, including these:

Construction of New Shuksan Middle School Nearing Completion for Fall Opening



Construction of the new Shuksan Middle School is nearing completion to open by the start of the 2009-10 school year. Whatcom County-based Colacurcio Brothers Construction Company Inc. is building the new Shuksan Middle School just south of the current school. The project continues to move forward on time and on budget. The new two-story Shuksan will include teaming areas for students and staff to collaborate. The “green” design will comply with the Washington State Sustainable Schools Protocol (equivalent to LEED Silver certification). Shuksan has been working

with its students, staff and parent community to create a focus for the new school as a Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Academy, where students will learn 21st century skills. Students will experience and explore learning opportunities in the arts, physical education/health, culture and history, and literacy through an integrated STEM curriculum in the future. A grand opening celebration featuring student-led tours of the new facility, demonstrations of student work and performances for Shuksan alumni and community members is planned for 5 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 1, followed by an open house for Shuksan families.

In order to expedite the timeline for creating new playfields on Shuksan’s grounds for students and community members, the timeline for demolition of the old Shuksan building has been moved up to this summer. Removal of the old, vacated building is under way and will continue section-by-section through August. Creation of the new playfields on the site of the old Shuksan facility, including seeding and underground irrigation, will occur this fall, allowing earlier access to the playfields for physical education classes and recreation in fall 2010, instead of 2011. In the meantime, Shuksan students will continue to play athletics on Birchwood Elementary School’s playfields. The updated timeline for this work also allows for landscaping of the grounds to occur earlier and for road improvements to Alderwood Avenue, the parking area and new driveway to be completed in early to mid-September. North of the school, Alderwood Avenue is being widened to include a turn lane into the new Shuksan to improve traffic; buses will access the new facility through a loop off Maplewood Avenue behind the building.

Seismic Safety Update for Columbia, Larrabee, Lowell, Whatcom and Roeder

Seismic retrofitting work to increase safety in the event of an earthquake continues at a few schools. All of Columbia Elementary School’s seismic work was completed during summer 2008. The first phase of seismic work at Whatcom Middle School is in the process of being completed. The final phases of

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retrofitting at Whatcom will continue through the fall.

The first of two phases of seismic retrofitting was completed prior to the start of the 2008-09 school year at Larrabee Elementary School. The final phase of work at Larrabee is nearing completion and includes re-enforcement of exterior walls and the roof, new floors, paint and new exterior front stairs. Contractors have been working double shifts this summer in order to complete the work prior to the start of school. Most of the exterior demolition seismic work has been completed as of June 30. By mid-July, contractors will return to working one shift. Seismic work is also continuing at Lowell Elementary School. Lowell's exterior walls are being reinforced and attached to the roof and floors. Lowell is not being used during its temporary closure for any other purpose.

Seismic work at the Central Services/Roeder building has been delayed to allow contractors to expedite work on the schools and to allow for earlier completion of Shuksan Middle School's playfields. The original plan was for Central Services staff to temporarily occupy the old Shuksan building, but this would have delayed students' and community access to playfields as well as completion of the new parking lot, driveway and road improvements. Central Services staff will likely need to relocate to another location due to the extensive retrofitting needed for the Roeder building. A new timeline for this work and temporary relocation site have not been established. There have never been and are no plans for Central Services staff to relocate to Lowell.

Aldrich Road Elementary School Update

At the March 26 meeting, the School Board approved the purchase of a wetlands mitigation site that is needed in order to build the Aldrich Road elementary school in the future. A revised construction timeline for building the new school has not yet been established. The district is continuing to closely monitor enrollment in northside elementary schools to determine if the rate of growth in this area is occurring as quickly as forecasted. Although 2009 enrollment numbers for northside elementary schools did not reflect an urgent need to open Aldrich as originally scheduled for next school year, the northside elementary schools that would be positively affected by the opening of the new school are currently over or near capacity. Since voters approved the bond in 2006, enrollment at Alderwood, Birchwood, Northern Heights and Sunnyland elementary schools has increased by a total of 182 students. Alderwood Elementary School currently is using one portable classroom, Birchwood has six portables in use and Sunnyland is using four portables. New elementary school boundaries for north Bellingham will take effect when the new Aldrich Road elementary school opens. To view boundary maps online: www.bham.wednet.edu/district/attendance.htm

Future Facilities Study

The district is considering the need to conduct a study, beyond the facilities data that is being gathered for city and county impact fees, that would provide a comprehensive districtwide review of the capacity of the district's facilities, use of portables, current and future enrollment, current and future space needs for programs, and other factors. Decisions about this future work have not been made. A timeline and information would be communicated if the study is initiated and the community would be involved.

Funding Sources

Funding for school construction, facility improvements and property purchases comes from a capital projects fund. This is separate from the district's general fund and by law, cannot be used for day-to-day operations or to address budget shortfalls. Funding for staffing to operate a school comes from the district's general fund. For more budget information, please visit: <http://www.bham.wednet.edu/staff/BudgetUpdate2009.htm>