

Mendocino Beacon

Grammar School Design Committee mobilized

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By CONNIE KORBEL Of The Beacon

The long anticipated selection and mobilizing of a committee of teachers, parents and school trustee to guide the architectural design of the Mendocino grammar and middle schools is decidedly under way. The group has been designated as Grammar School Design Committee add GSDC to your education acronym list. They met with Quattrocchi Kwok Architects for the first time on Jan. 19.

Janet Stein, Eric Hillslande and John Birdsall are the parent representatives, Deena Zarin, Mark Morton and Lynda Cinnamon are teacher representatives. Also serving on the committee are Principal Bronwyn Rhoades and Charlie Acker, appointed to represent the school district Board of Trustees. Also attending were Superintendent Jim Shock and school board President Gloria Liner.

Architect Mark Quattrocchi led a presentation that highlighted the California funding and approval agencies, particularly the Office of Public School Construction (OPSC), which has several funding programs for packaging potential grants for the project.

Within OPSC funding, MUSD options for eligibility prospects will likely materialize from a cluster of available sources. Among the opportunities are new construction (for unhoused students at 50/50 percent funding), modernization (for students in over 25-year-old buildings at 60/40 percent funding), facility hardship (for students displaced by damaged facilities at 50/50 percent with costs exceeding 50 percent replacement rule), rehabilitation (costs for approved structural repairs at 60/40 percent with cost under 50 percent replacement rule), extreme hardship (costs for urgent critical improvements such as roofing or limited dry rot) and joint use (up to \$2 million if the district forms a partnership with another public agency).

Quattrocchi then used overhead projected photographs to graphically display facility damage from standing water, dry rot, termite travel, rusting steel and ventilation blocked by mounds of dirt.

The group then brainstormed and composed two detailed lists of what they perceived as problems with the existing design versus those features they feel work well. Although the problems far out-weighed the advantages, many grievances stem from changing times and aging facilities.

Primary design problems centered on configuration of spaces substandard against today's standards, poor lighting, heating, ventilation and the sound carried by floors. Advantages are identified in an overall layout that provides several communal areas, staggered placement of classrooms, multiple entrances, multi-use areas and entering porticoes that create a welcoming, friendly and interactive atmosphere.

When asked to describe what they want from their school, committee members were quick to agree on a welcoming atmosphere that is mindful of the kids, teachers and parents who function there. They envision a school that looks like it fits contextually well in the community. Foremost is their commitment to a school that is kid-centered that it provide a safe, healthy and efficient learning environment.

The Grammar School Design Committee will meet next on Thursday, Feb. 10 at 3:45 p.m. in the grammar school library