

School district abandons plans for bond measure

July 7, 2020



Del Norte County's school board has decided not to ask voters to approve a bond measure in November.

At a meeting on Wednesday, July 1, board members decided instead to look toward 2022 which would give them more time to get the community behind a \$30 million bond to address a fraction of \$280 million in needed repairs.

Among concerns expressed is the fact that both Del Norte County and the city of Crescent City are going for sales tax increases in November.

Board members are concerned about the need to make repairs at schools.

"I would love to show the community, 'This is why we need it,'" said trustee Angela Greenough. "It's not just the bathrooms — it's the walls, it's our classrooms, it's our facilities, it's our piping, it's the places you don't really see like the edge of the baseboards of buildings, it's eaves — it's everywhere. You can just go to any school and just see that this needs help, but I don't have the funds to just fix it, which is really frustrating."

Jon Isom, of Isom Advisors, conducted a community survey for DNUSD in March to measure a bond's chance of passing. He told trustees Wednesday that even though interest rates are at an ideal level, the margin of error had to be maximized in his survey results to get to a 55 percent voter approval, still short of the 60 percent required to pass a bond.

"Most notably, would you vote for our school measure if you also knew there was a city tax, a county tax and a fire tax?" He said. "That's new information we didn't have at the time and that's information that I would argue would take away some of the support you may have otherwise enjoyed."

In June, Crescent City and Del Norte County both moved forward to ask voters to approve one-cent sales tax increases in November, to pay for extensive public safety issues.

And Superintendent Jeff Harris told school trustees that the Crescent Fire Protection District is also expected to place a property tax assessment on a special ballot within its jurisdiction in September or October.

“We had to make sure everybody behind a bond measure was in lock-step with us if we were going to make it work because the initial poll had come out 56 percent in favor of education at the highest margin of error,” Harris said.

Teacher Mary-Michelle Cupp spoke to trustees of another hurdle the school district faces as a member of a “corrections family.”

“Something you need to keep in mind is corrections is a huge employer and corrections officers are all taking a pay cut with a new contract coming out, with the new budget,” Cupp said. “I don’t know how many people are going to be behind a ‘yes tax me more.’ I do think schools need to be refurbished and repaired. I’m sad to go to work and see how crappy the buildings look, but I don’t think this is the right time now.”