

Valley and View improvements approved

by David Rosenfeld

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The Hermosa Beach School District approved \$7.8 million in modernization costs at both Valley and View elementary schools last week.

The board has yet to sign off on about \$7 million in new construction planned at Hermosa Valley School, which includes a gymnasium and eight new classrooms.

The district is likely to approve more than \$400,000 in deductions at its next scheduled meeting.

The funds — including upgrades to plumbing and electricity systems -- come primarily from the \$13.6 million Measure J bond passed last November as well as \$1.9 million passed in March as part of the statewide Proposition 55. The school district maintains additional money from the sale of various properties throughout town over the last 20 to 30 years and fees charged to developers who build in Hermosa.

The modernization and new construction are expected to begin in June, lasting throughout the summer and into the following school year. Summer school on campus will be canceled and the district will offer independent study instead.

Consultants PCM3 handled the contractor's bidding package that came in last week, in total nearly 25 percent over budget.

Representatives said the bids came in higher than expected because the project did not receive many applicants due to an abundance of school construction contracts funded by bond money throughout the state.

"There's just too much work out there right now. People are being very selective," said PCM3 representative Ben Menasherov, who presented the board with a table of recent bids put out by the company at other schools throughout the state that also exceeded their projected budgets.

The consultant company also cited the inflated price of steel and other building materials.

School board members scrutinized the numbers put forward by PCM3 keeping in mind the furor caused by overspending on construction and modernization projects at Mira Costa High School in Manhattan Beach.

School Board President Linda Beck confronted the consultants with raised eyebrows. She questioned the estimates for soft costs, money spent on logistics other than construction, which PCM3 had stated would not exceed 30 percent of the total. The current budget figures put the school district's soft costs at 34 percent.

School board members expressed discontent with the Labor Compliance Program, a statewide initiative enacted in 2002 that mandates the use of bond money for a program to ensure all labor is in compliance with proper workplace standards. The program in Hermosa is expected to cost the school district \$90,000.

Board members also found a bone of contention with a nearly \$7,000 charge to rent a mobile trailer for an on-site inspector, seen as a superfluous requirement by board member Cathy McCurdy who delivered the only dissenting vote of the evening.

As part of the stipulation for receiving the bond money, the district set up a citizens' oversight committee with representatives from five sectors of the community: business, a senior organization, a taxpayer organization, a parent, a parent-teacher organization. In addition the board has two members from the community at large.

The committee, chaired by resident Sam Abrams, is assigned for two years and has met six times so far with school district officials and PCM3 representatives.

"We have not found anything yet that has raised a red flag," Abrams said.

The project entails a tremendous amount of moving. Some school classrooms will be housed in temporary trailers to be placed on the playground grass.

This will be the first complete remodeling of the school since the early 1970s. The lion's share of the project includes more than \$1 million at View school and \$1.4 million at Valley for an electrical and fire alarm system. There will be \$1 million at Valley and \$560,000 at View spent on general construction, \$950,000 at Valley and \$211,000 at View for mechanical and plumbing improvements, \$296,000 at Valley for roofing and sheet metal, \$48,000 at View for asbestos and lead abatement, \$74,000 at Valley for cabinets and casework, \$150,000 at

Valley for doors, frames and hardware, \$132,000 at Valley for painting, and \$78,000 at Valley for floor covering. The district also approved about \$300,000 in logistical costs including \$30,000 in moving fees to relocate classes, \$200,000 in temporary trailers to house those classes, \$22,600 to architects Dougherty and Dougherty to include services for placement of those units, \$14,000 for eight storage containers, \$13,800 for state mandated testing services and \$25,000 in printing fees for bid-related documents and blueprints. ER

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