

HERMOSA BEACH

North School, renamed Hermosa Vista School, set for February completion

by Michael Hixon

More than four years after Hermosa Beach voters passed a nearly \$60 million general obligation bond to rebuild North School to alleviate overcrowding at the city's elementary and middle schools, completion is in view in spite of delays due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The new school was originally slated for completion in December, at the winter break, said Hermosa Beach City School District Superintendent Dr. Jason Johnson last week. But delays caused the target date to move to February 17, near Presidents' Day.

"In the last six months, it's really been a matter of Erickson-Hall (Construction), trying to be creative and work hard to play catch up and to navigate the delays," Johnson said.

The Hermosa Beach City School District named Erickson-Hall Construction the general contractor in 2019 to provide facilities project management services for Measure S, a \$59 million general obligation bond which was passed in June 2016. The bond funds the North School construction project and modernization projects at Hermosa View and Valley and to eliminate portable classrooms, at Valley and View.

Construction at Hermosa View will begin in February, said Johnson.

North School — renamed Hermosa Vista School at the Oct. 14 school board meeting — will be the new home to third and fourth graders. Hermosa View will house kindergarten to second graders, while Hermosa Valley will have fifth to eighth graders.

Project was approved by the school board in Jan. 2019, residents raised concerns about traffic, parking, safety and the scope of the project.

Last week, the school district and the Hermosa Beach City Council adopted the North School Neighborhood Transportation Management Plan, which was delayed due to the coronavirus, to enhance public safety and traffic flow at North School without causing delays in construction.

With Hermosa Beach schools still closed to in-person instruction due to the coronavirus lockdown, Johnson said it will be disappointing that a broader community celebration inside the new building will not be happening in February. But Johnson said a celebration done safely will happen eventually.

"I just want to get the kids in there," Johnson said.

"We have a really great staff. We have a really strong community and student community," Johnson added. "It's a lot of people being very flexible and seeing the bigger picture."



This will be the multi-purpose room of The North School, which is under construction and scheduled to be completed February 2021. (Photo by Brittany Murray, Press-Telegram/SCNG)

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Anthony Han, project manager from Erickson-Hall, said his company had a slight dip of manpower during the coronavirus shutdown, but are now back to a near normal level. There were also delays receiving some materials, said Han.

"Initially when they first announced the shutdown, a lot of the workers had their priorities, more focusing on family and making sure that there was someone to take care of their kids," Han said.

Another delay, according to Han, was discovering asbestos-coated pipe underground, which he said is common for buildings that are decades old. It took days to follow proper protocols, completing hazardous cleanup and getting clearance to resume work.

"That whole period was pretty much our only main hiccup throughout this whole project duration," Han said. "Everything for the most part kind of stayed true to what we were anticipating."

The new school is being designed as a net zero energy building, said Han, meaning the building will generate as much energy as it uses. Solar panels will be added to harvest solar energy to power the school, Han said.

In 2017, HBCSD faced a lawsuit claiming North School was a culturally significant historic landmark that should not be razed, but renovated. Architect Samuel E. Lunden, who had designed other historic buildings such as the Los Angeles Stock Exchange Building, was the architect for the original Pier Avenue School, which originally dates back to 1911 and is now the city's Community Center. Lunden was hired to rebuild North and Pier Avenue School after they suffered major damage due to the 1933 6.2-magnitude Long Beach earthquake. The lawsuit was thrown out in March 2018 in Los Angeles Superior Court.

After the North School Reconstruction