

EDUCATION

South gym: Build it and they might fund

Principal says El Pomar 'very interested' in helping project

BY JON POMPIA

THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN

There's a new gymnasium on the way at South High School and the board of education of Pueblo City Schools (D60) received an update on it during a special meeting last week.

Principal Aaron Bravo was joined by Dave Caporicci, an alumni and supporter, in presenting the information.

The big news centers around the potential participation of El Pomar Foundation.

While Bravo noted that some funds have already been raised in collaboration with the South High School Foundation, "We are now reaching out to major donors such as El Pomar. And El Pomar is very interested in the project.

"But one of the stipulations, if they are to participate, is that the facility would be accessible for community and youth programs."

While community accessibility already is in place per district policy, El Pomar has asked for it to be put in writing, Bravo told the board.



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DAVE CAPORICCI

SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL ALUMNI AND SUPPORTER

The philanthropic foundation, Caporicci said, does not typically grant funds to school districts. But, due to the potential positive impact on both students and community, El Pomar is strongly considering participating.

While an initial cost estimate put the South gym project at \$2 million, Caporicci said the final cost likely will be closer to \$3 million.

But, preliminary talks with the foundation have indicated a potential contribution of as much as \$2.5 million.

Added Caporicci, "We've already got about \$350,000 of in-kind work, and it's building. The interesting thing is that

when we've been presenting this to El Pomar, they've agreed, on their own, to go to the Daniels Foundation and Anschutz.

"One way or another, this gym is going to get built."

Should El Pomar come on board with funding, Caporicci said ground could be broken by the end of the school year.

As for the public access stipulation put forth by El Pomar, Bravo told the board such accessibility would not extend beyond the district's facilities use policy already in place.

For not only South but other district facilities, "We already have these relationships in place with the city of Pueblo

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as well as the YMCA," Bravo explained. "I believe it's just the formal 'in writing' that states just that."

In response to another question, Bravo said the gym's expected 1,350 capacity is in line with the Colorado High School Activities Association's guidelines for hosting playoff events.

The next step, board Vice President Patricia Milner said, is to have district leaders look over the district's facilities use agreement before drafting a letter that states, "This is the district's policy and the district intends to follow this policy in the context of this new building."

As the district has already passed a resolution supporting fundraising efforts for the new gym, such a letter would serve to reinforce the district's backing.

If necessary, the board said a special resolution to this effect could be crafted.

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