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Shenango takes first steps toward sports complex

By Maria Basileo

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Shenango Wildcats logo



Superintendent Dr. Michael Schreck gave a presentation to the Shenango school board on Aug. 12 about research he had done on the district's sports complex construction project.

"This project will help address several of our needs in the short-term while we continue to plan a potential elementary school project in the future," Schreck wrote in an email.

Schrek presented the approximately \$4.9 million project featuring an indoor facility as well as an outdoor artificial turf football field. The indoor facility, according to Schreck's presentation, is projected to be 222 feet by 152 feet, and will feature a batting cage, weight room, track, volleyball/basketball court and football/soccer turf field.

The board approved three action items about the construction during the meeting with 7-1 votes, with Monica Rich voting no and an abstention from Sam Biasucci.

The issues sparking the interest in building the facility are due to scheduling conflicts with the current field, late sport practices, limited space for other organizations, subpar practice field conditions and drainage issues on the main football field, according to Schreck.

The projected facility would be able to house spring/winter sports, be accessible for clubs and have an indoor walking facility for the public.

"It will be lucrative in the sense that it will help ease the scheduling issues and facility shortfalls we currently have in the district," said Schreck in an email. "A potential side benefit would be that the district may be more attractive for families considering moving to our area."

Some of the cons outlined in Schreck's presentation include displacing the band and challenges with full football and marching band rehearsal.

The board approved the hiring of HHSDR Architects and Engineers based out of Sharon to provide professional designs services for the complex and turf field. The firm has been the architect for the district "for some time," according to Schreck, thus bids were not advertised.

Schreck says the construction of the project is still up in the air as the board must finalize the "scope and design of the building." The board must also wait for the bidding process to be complete, and must be satisfied with the final cost.

“If the board is not satisfied with the final cost, they can decline to continue with the project,” Schreck wrote in an email.

The complex is part one of a two-part process where the district plans construction on an elementary school in the future.

According to Schreck, the district is currently debt free after they paid the last installment for a roof projected completed in 2014. The district’s hoping to use the money allocated for the previous roof payment towards the athletic complex.

The board will investigate loan and bond issues in order to foot the perhaps \$4.9 million for building and turf field. The price is an approximation as a firm cost will be unknown until bids begin to come in.

“We are hopeful it will be lower,” said Schreck.

At last month’s meeting, candidates for the school board voiced their curiosity about the project during public comment. John Colella and his daughter-in-law, Jeana Colella, asked for transparency about the project’s prospects. Rumors about the project had been circling around the township since the project was first brought up during the board’s June meeting.

“They (public) need to know what size it is, what it costs, how the funding’s going to be,” said Jeana Colella at last month’s meeting. “Believe me, I’m not for or against it because I don’t have enough information to say if it’s good or bad.”

“For the most part, the feedback I received has been very positive,” said Schreck. “The facility needs of the district are well-known in the community.”

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