



NEWPORT SCHOOLS MOVING FORWARD WITH STADIUM REPLACEMENT

NEWPORT –The Newport Board of Education voted unanimously Wednesday to move forward with plans to replace the 83-year-old Newport High School football stadium, which the school has been unable to use since it failed a building inspection earlier this year.

After months of considering other alternatives, including repairing portions of the failing structure, the board followed the recommendation of Robert Ehmet Hayes & Associates, PLLC, Architects, and decided to fund the first phase of an estimated \$2.5 million replacement project that will include the demolition of the existing stadium and the installation of a 1,500-seat grandstand.

“We looked at a number of alternatives, but it came down to replacement is the best approach and the most prudent use of school resources and taxpayer dollars,” said Board Member Aaron Sutherland.

The goal is to begin work this summer and have the new stadium ready by the start of 2022-23 school year late. The Newport Wildcats football team has been playing its games on the road and practicing at Holmes High School and on the field at Newport High School, which has not been impacted by the condition of the stadium.

The district will finance the project with \$1 million cash and \$2 million in borrowed funds. The extra funding beyond the projected cost will be used as a cushion for potential contingencies or changes once the project is underway.

Future phases of the project, which would be completed when more borrowing capacity becomes available, could include installation of a new track and construction of a concession stand, restrooms, locker rooms, a ticketing area, training facility and new field lighting. The district also plans to seek private donations through a fundraising effort. Details of the fundraising will be announced at a later date.

Even though the Wildcats currently do not have a field of their own, the team's players and fans have adapted, said first year Newport High School Varsity Football Coach Ryan Hahn.

“As long as there is grass, painted lines and some form of goal posts, we will play football,” Coach Hahn told the board. “The fans would sit in lawn chairs or in even in the back of my truck to watch this team play. We can handle whatever comes our way. Our kids are in great spirits. They just want to represent their school and play football.”

Coach Hahn also said he has been impressed with how the fans have reacted to no home games. “Our fans travel well,” he said. “That shows the kids that even though we don't currently have a stadium, there are people that still care about them. And they players need to see that more than ever.”

Board Chairwoman Ramona Malone said she appreciated Coach Hahn's comments and thanked him for attending the meeting on behalf of his team and expressing his support for the board's commitment to Newport High School and the Wildcat program.

"Coach Hahn did a great job of stressing the importance of the board moving forward with this project," said Chairwoman Malone. "This is a major project and undertaking in order to meet the needs of our students, families, staff and the community. The board's decision to move forward with the first phase of the project is the best and most prudent financial decision we can make at this time."