

## New school facilities taking shape for 2010

With the passage of the \$31 million school bond in June, Grand County School District officials are moving quickly into the design phase, and they're seeking help from the community and looking toward higher education to help shape the opportunities presented by a new elementary school and a high school vocational center.

The district has received proposals from four Utah architecture firms, and district officials have assembled a team to review the proposals. After the board selects a design team, the district will assemble 20 focus groups to examine different aspects of the designs.

"The focus groups can be made up of anyone in the community, [and] staff members – we will be asking for people who are interested to just call the district office so we know how many people will attend," Grand County School Superintendent Margaret Hopkin said. "The focus groups represent different areas of the design. We have just the general design, but then we have specifics like the lunch room, and the kitchen and food service. We have the multi-purpose room and the stage, the grounds, the playgrounds."

The district will send out a mailer this week to invite anyone interested to participate; it will list the different areas of interest. Hopkin said anyone interested should call the district, 259-5317, to join the groups.

"I'm anticipating them to meet

maybe two times at the most. It's not something that's going to go on and on," Hopkin said. "We'll meet once this month to get people thinking. Then we'll meet again and get our ideas lined out, then probably send reps to the design team – unless the team wants to talk to the whole focus group."

While anyone is welcome to join the groups, the district will identify people with specific areas of interest to participate; for instance, the police and fire chiefs would have a particular interest in safety. The district has already been including interested parties in the planning process, from the Green Schools Committee to the Higher Education Action Team (HEAT).

School board member Jim Webster has been participating with the HEAT group, which is working to bring higher education to Moab. A major component of Utah State University's plan to expand in the Moab area is development of applied technology education at the same time, which would provide a feeder system for USU's four-year program. The College of Eastern Utah has been engaged in the discussion to provide those opportunities.

"One of the things that we hope, and not just the school district but a lot of people hope, is that we can get the College of Eastern Utah to step up and partner with the school district to make this vocational school more of a community facility," Webster said.

"That was the intent all along, and

we're working with CEU to offer continuing education in applied technology for adults, as well as students."

Conceptual plans for the new vocational facility call for a building that can accommodate current programs all on one campus – many high school programs are currently held at the adjacent middle school campus. "It will provide for a cohesive high school campus instead of a divided one," Webster said. "It will have state-of-the art, modern classroom facilities for some of these vocational ed offerings that we now offer but in much less desirable conditions."

However, if CEU participates, the district could expand into programs students have identified as priorities through a HEAT survey, including welding bays for the auto shop. Webster said that advanced applied technology training is a major need in the community. "It's the part that's missing here. They've got it in Carbon and Emery County, they've got it in San Juan, and Grand County isn't even being underserved – it's not being served at all."

By bringing together all of the individuals and entities who have in interest in the future of education in Grand County, Hopkin has high hopes for the process. "It will be a lot of fun. I think that we can create these schools to not only meet our needs but reflect our desires for our students' success in our future facilities," she said.

**by Ron Georg [published 8/14/08]**