

Re-1J school to apply for \$4 mil. in BEST grants

Written by Brenda Johnson Brandt

Holyoke School District will be submitting \$4 million in grant applications through the BEST (Building Excellent Schools Today) program of the Dept. of Education's Division of Public School Capital Construction Assistance.

Grant writing support by staff from the Neenan Company will be utilized twice this month, with the grant due March 4.

Five cash grants will be included in the application, Supt. Bret Miles explained at the Feb. 15 school board meeting.

With the grand total of \$4,005,415, BEST program's contribution would be \$2,323,140, and Holyoke School District's 42 percent match would be \$1,682,274.

The district's interest rate of 3.85 percent would come to \$64,768. This would represent a \$174,704 annual payment over a 10-year period.

Grant No. 1 Proposal includes safe electrical distribution, information technology, elementary school boiler replacement and fully addressable fire alarm systems.

Grant No. 2 proposes roof replacement for the entire elementary school and the high school building built in 1976.

Grant No. 3 centers around entry security upgrades at both schools.

Grant No. 4 encompasses HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) upgrades, mostly at the elementary school.

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Grant No. 5 covers site security and bus drop-offs.

A sixth grant for fire sprinklers at both buildings was pulled off, said Miles.

A feedback/review time for the grant process is targeted for March 7-June 3, with recommendations to be made June 28-30.

Grants will be submitted for information at the July State Board meeting and submitted for action at the August meeting.

“We’ll continue to keep you informed,” said Supt. Miles, adding, “This is the scope we feel has a chance to be approved.”

School calendar policy approved on first reading

A school year/school calendar/instruction time policy was revised and approved on first reading last week. Details of the policy changes were reviewed thoroughly at the Jan. 20 board meeting.

The old policy has been waived repeatedly in the past 15 years due to the statement noting “The number of days scheduled for students shall not be less than 180.”

The revised policy focuses on instruction time as opposed to days. It’s the board’s intent to put together 2011-12 calendar proposals which are comparable in number of days to the current year’s calendar.

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A budget timeline for fiscal year 2012 was also approved last week. Budget priorities are scheduled to be presented in March.

Other business

In other business Feb. 15, the Re-1J board:

—approved the renewal of Supt. Miles' contract for 2012-13. Miles was commended for his leadership, enthusiasm and motivation.

—hired Kelvin Haidle as assistant HS track coach and volunteer HS boys' basketball coach.

—approved application for Type V teaching authorization for Haidle and Jessica Watkins.

—ratified the closing of school on Feb. 1 and 2 due to inclement weather.

—held a 35-minute executive session at the close of the meeting for principal evaluations.

—reviewed policies in Sections A, B and C at a work session following the regular meeting.