

Loudon schools ready to celebrate facility groundbreaking

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While Director of Schools Jason Vance cautioned Loudon County Board of Education members Thursday not to be too optimistic, he said he was pleased the \$1.4 million cost for excavation and site work at Greenback School came in lower than expected by a few hundred thousand dollars.

"However, there will be unanticipated costs along the way," Vance warned. "We had not anticipated putting in a pump station at Greenback nor did we anticipate putting in turn lanes at Fort Loudoun Middle School. We will have to install those lanes both at Steekee Road and Highway 11, and they expect that costs to be in excess of \$200,000.

"However, I still believe we are well within range of our scope of work," he said.

Bids for the rest of the work on the new Greenback School are slated to be opened Nov. 21, and the bids for the new Fort Loudon Middle School excavation and site work will be opened Nov. 15. In the meantime, Vance is scheduling a groundbreaking at the two schools.

"I think this is a great time to celebrate," he said, noting the Greenback School event is planned for 11 a.m. Nov. 19 while

he is looking at scheduling the Fort Loudoun event for Dec. 1.

In other financial matters, Board Member Bobby Johnson, who serves on the building and maintenance committee, warned the school system has already spent more than half of its budget for maintenance.

He said some of the costs occurred because of storm damage at Greenback, Highland Park and Steekee schools. There were also HVAC system repairs at one of the schools and the Loudon High School boiler had to be repaired.

Philadelphia School is facing other repairs and Eaton Elementary School's foundation has cracks.

Johnson said there is \$198,159 in the budget. "We spent over half of it," he added. "We've got about \$50,000 to spend."

On a separate matter, Chairman Scotty Newman requested eliminating board workshops, but it met with opposition.

Ric Best, board member, suggested keeping the workshops but only having them when necessary.

Another board member, Van Shaver, countered that the workshops give him time to look at the information before making decision.

"I think this workshop serves a purpose," he said. "We owe a certain amount of due diligence."

Likewise, board members Lisa Russell and Gary Ubben said workshops give them more time to study.

"I remember before I was on the board I wondered how the people (on the board) are coming in here and making decisions without discussion," Russell said.

Residents in the audience also voiced objections to cancelling the workshops.

"I am concerned with transparency and the Sunshine Law," Pat Hunter said.

Board member Bill Marcus pointed out how the board will be talking about the same items at its next meeting. "I think we are redundant in how we do business," he said. "I always want to be transparent."

In other business, board members:

- Transferred \$20,425 from the teacher's salary fund to cover the cost of a Worker's Compensation audit.

- Received a proposal to hire Mike Hicks as a field maintenance worker at Greenback School. His employment will be addressed at the board's next meeting at 7 p.m. Thursday in Loudon County Courthouse Annex.

- Received a proposal from the maintenance committee to add \$90,000 to the maintenance budget. No action was taken.

Fire marshal: Change batteries in fire alarms this weekend