

Greetings Fellow Citizens of North Mason,

Recently the NMSD Board of Directors voted to seek a loan of \$4 million dollars to fund the construction of a new football stadium, the final project of the current renovation of the main campus.

A new High School, Middle School, alternative High School (James Taylor), Administration Building, and other district-wide physical improvements have been completed—all funded by the community in a 2013 bond passage. Now, as we near the last phase of this ambitious work, it is time to address the football stadium.

The school board has maintained fiscal responsibility throughout the construction process, as well as with daily operations of the school. It has always been our goal to “live within our means” fiscally, and we have understood this value to be shared throughout our community.

Unlike other districts, we have not sought the most money that the law will allow from our community via local maintenance levies. When we asked you to support the bond in 2013, we had a state match promise of more than \$10 million added to the amount voted on to help pay for everything. We have successfully held our fiscal line in our daily operations, and in our construction of the new school facilities. However, real world cost realities have finally come home to roost with us as we look at options for the new football stadium.

When the bond was approved, construction costs were low and the forecast in costs over the subsequent years were rosy. However, construction costs have risen 23% since then, and even though we have completed our new facilities without excessive after-bid change orders, and despite having planned for excess cost contingencies, we find ourselves with less funds than what is needed to build a top-notch stadium from the ground up. What should we do?

The cost of a brand new stadium is minimally about \$7.5 million dollars. Though we do have some funds left, there is not nearly enough to cover the cost.

As a compromise, we considered paring down the scale of the project. But after looking at that option, we still did not have enough funding remaining even for a new “bare bones” stadium.

Our community Facilities Advisory committee, plus our bond project engineers and architects and others came up with a rudimentary plan to renovate the current Phil Pugh Football stadium into a state of the art modern facility that would meet the needs of our school and community and be cost-friendlier so we could afford to do it.

The \$4 million-dollar loan will cover the cost of the renovating the existing stadium and also allow us to address additional community sports field needs at the same time.

Along with renovating the existing stadium, we can create a new grass field for sports at the Centrex location (over by the Boys & Girls Club where the new stadium had been planned), make suitable

improvements to the old softball stadium, deal with parking and other considerations, and keep us “living within our means”.

At the time of writing the column, the board had not formally approved a specific project for a new or renovated stadium, but since our costs and finances are now clearer, I would expect that the board will ultimately approve remodeling the Phil Pugh Stadium over trying to construct a brand new one.

Although I believe that our community might like a brand-new stadium, we wouldn't like it enough to vote for another bond to fund it, and that you all collectively would appreciate it more if we continued to “live within our means” at all times.

I'm with you on that all the way!

Art Wightman
NMSD Board of Directors
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