

The Pulaski County Board of Education is considering building a new school building that will house kindergarten through 12th grade. It is generally considered that school buildings should be replaced when they are about 50 years old. Hawkinsville High School was built in 1975. Fifty years is fast approaching. At this time Pulaski County qualifies for funding called Specific Low Wealth. This funding is based on Splost revenues. Specific Low Wealth is approved yearly by the state legislature. There is no guarantee that it will be funded from one year to the next. School systems in the bottom 25 % of splost funds qualify for specific low wealth. Currently, Pulaski County qualifies but the county is very near the 75% number. If we move to less than the bottom 25% the funding is reduced considerably. Qualifying for Specific Low Wealth essentially means that the school district will receive about 77% of the cost to build a K-12 building. The percentage is about 60 % from the state for a 6-12 building.

The question then becomes why build a K-12 building. High School buildings qualify for greater funding per classroom than middle schools do. Middle Schools qualify for more funding per classroom than elementary. If you build anything under the same roof, then all classrooms qualify at the highest rate. Thus, all instructional units would receive state funding for the high school rate.

There will be concerns about elementary school students in the same building as high school students. Wilcox County and Treutlen County have completed K-12 buildings recently. Their stakeholders have no concerns with this mixture after viewing the separation of students that is utilized in the structure. Several of us have visited Wilcox County and its new school. I can honestly say that we were all impressed by the separation of students from the time they arrived at school until they departed.

There also technology advantages to be considered:

Every instructional classroom would have a modern interactive Panel (SmartTV) that connects to the internet with educational technology). These panels allow for presentations that captivate student's attention. We are currently striving to add this technology, but it takes time and money to implement. In addition to interactive panels, the classrooms would be built to current multimedia standards to include room speakers and current computers / chrome books. By including this into the building costs, we can get this done system-wide for less money.

Being state of the art, allows our students to experience technology that will best resemble what they will find out in the real world. Thus, we will be better preparing our students.

Safety is so important in this day and age. The building would be equipped with state-of-the-art camera / security systems that will increase the safety of our students and staff. The cameras will allow for monitoring of the students and the entire campus for safety, security, and disciplinary matters. Also, better check-in, check-out procedures including electronic doors will also help increase the safety of our staff and students.

Another advantage is that all the technology will be consistent throughout the system. Currently, one teacher may have a 6-year-old computer while another has a 1-year old computer. By being able to do this all at once, we will have a consistency that we could otherwise not afford. Consistency brings about many advantages; one being that as teachers move from classroom to classroom, or even grade level to grade level, they will already know how to utilize the technology in the building.

All equipment purchased will be new and have warranties, thus reducing our technology maintenance costs. There are inherent costs trying to maintain old, outdated equipment. Newer computers and equipment work faster and better with lower costs.

There are also other costs that we currently have; such as traveling between schools. We often need a part at one school with the part being stored at another school. Our technology team actually spends an accountable amount of time traveling between schools. Besides the cost, this also means increased times between a problem and the resolution of the problem.

Other costs savings include lack of duplication of technology. For example, right now we have TWO full cafeterias with checkout computers, manager computers, etc. Right now, we have TWO full media centers with checkout computers and associated software that must be purchased.

So new facilities solve many technology issues. We would better prepare our students and better secure our students all at a lower cost and more efficient and effective manner that we currently can do

The Board of Education considered three proposals:

1. Full building modernization of the high school and middle School. The cost to the system after state funding would be approximately 5.9 million dollars.
2. Building a 6-12 (Middle and High School) facility. The total cost for building would be approximately 26.3 million dollars the system would pay about 40% which would be 10.5 million dollars.
3. Building a k-12 facility. The total cost for this building for this project is estimated at 48,034,494 The state would provide 37,144,526 dollars leaving the school system a cost of 10,889,968 dollars. Pulaski County qualifies for 76 instructional units in state funding.

The costs include:

- The demolition of the current middle and high schools

The replacing of:

- the softball field with lights
- tennis courts with lights (3 courts instead of 2)
- baseball field with lights
- (the football stadium and gyms would not be effected)

The total cost for a K-12 building funded at this rate is about 48 million dollars. We would receive 37,155,000 from the state.

In other words, Pulaski County can build a Kindergarten through 12th grade building for less than 500,000 dollars than it would take to build a 6-12 building. A new elementary school would be built for about ½ million dollars of tax payer expense. Again, it should be reiterated that splost funds will be used to repay the debt. No raise in property taxes are anticipated.

Our Splost collections have averaged approximately 950,000/year. Bonds would be sold and paid off in a 20-year period. The cost to pay off would be approximately 750,000 per year. This would give the school system some breathing room economically for other needs. It should be stated that at this time we have 2.2 million dollars in splost funds that can be utilized over the next few years for needs. We also have a fund equity of about 3.5 million dollars.

Lastly, it should be stated that operational costs would be less with a K-12 facility. There would be less staff needed to operate when everyone is in one building versus three buildings. Buses would also have less travel.

In summary:

- The Pulaski County Board of Education is considering a proposal to build a K-12 School that would be funded 77% by the state that is a part of the Specific Low Wealth funding opportunity that is currently available from the state and the remaining 23 % from local funds (splost) There is no guarantee that the Specific Low Wealth Funding will continue. It is voted on yearly.
- The property designated to build on is adjacent to the Middle School and Hawkinsville High School.
- This is in essence a 50-year plan that should serve Hawkinsville and Pulaski County well for less than 11 million dollars.
- Safety for students would be greatly enhanced as well as technology for better academic opportunities.