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District Appoints Bond Oversight Committee

An 11-member citizen committee would provide oversight of the proposed Baker School District capital construction bond if voters approve it in the Nov. 6 election.

The district is seeking a $48 million bond to build a new elementary school and to address safety and security concerns in all schools. Other major components in the bond include energy efficiency improvements at all schools and capital improvements at Baker High School to accommodate the addition of 7th and 8th graders.

Superintendent Mark Witty appointed 11 community members with expertise in construction, finance and related fields to serve on the committee. The committee will be charged with monitoring the planned improvements, progress, schedule and costs of the bond program.

Committee members and their area of expertise include:
- Ed Adamson, Construction Management
- Martin Arritola, Baker County Economic Development/Business Owner
- Liz Burton, Educational Administration
- Charlene Chase, Long Range Facilities Planning Committee
- Tabor Clarke, Long Range Facilities Planning Committee/Business Owner/Financial
- Cathy Cook, Business Owner/Financial
- Nathan Defrees, Business Professional
- Dennis Dougherty, Planning/Engineer
- Hal Huntington, Community Leadership
- Dave Lindley, Financial
- Phil Stone, Business Owner/Parent

“I am pleased with the collective expertise represented by the individuals who have come forward to serve on the Bond Oversight Committee,” said Witty. “Their knowledge base will be critical in providing effective management of the bond proceeds if the community chooses to approve the bond measure.”
The committee would work directly with the superintendent and have access to reports, construction sites and documents pertinent to their charge. However, they would have no independent authority to obligate district funds.

Their responsibilities would include:

- Review/participate in the process to select general contractors, architects, vendors and consultants for major projects
- Review financial statements, project scope, construction documents and bid solicitations to ensure bond funds are spent only on voter-approved projects
- Regularly inspect school facilities and grounds to ensure bond revenues are expended appropriately
- Recommend policies/procedures to enhance accountability of bond funds
- Communicate about bond progress (annual report to the community and district website)
- Inform program decisions made by Superintendent and/or Board

If approved, the bond would cost homeowners an estimated $1.97 per $1,000 of the assessed value of their home. That’s about $197 per year, or $16.42 per month, for a home assessed at $100,000.

About Baker School District 5J

Nationally recognized Baker School District 5J (BSD) in Baker City, OR, is the largest of three rural school districts in Baker County, serving 1,700 students and employing over 235 educators and staff. District elementary schools include Brooklyn Primary School, Haines Elementary, Keating Elementary School, and South Baker Intermediate. Baker Middle School and two high schools, Baker High School and Eagle Cap Innovative High School, are also part of BSD. Additionally, BSD sponsors two charter schools, Baker Web Academy and Baker Early College, each offering teacher-supported online education. BSD provides next generation education for the future of Eastern Oregonians and launched Baker Technical Institute (BTI), a career and technical program that partners with regional employers and industry experts to provide an innovative education in hands-on fields. BSD believes strong schools are the foundation of strong and vibrant communities and is committed to prepare students to become successful life-long learner.

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The Baker 5J schools exist to be the center of community vitality eliminating the barriers for gratifying individual educational experiences in order to have capable contributing citizens with character.