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Ten-year plan under way for Taos High School

By Elizabeth Cleary

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A private architectural firm has been given the green light to create a plan for how Taos High School should look in 10 years.

The Taos Municipal School Board unanimously approved Tuesday night (Sept. 25) allocating \$17,700 to the Living Designs Group to create the plan.

The plan is set for completion in January and is funded with gross receipts tax money.

Doug Patterson, an architect with LDG who proposed creating the plan to the school board Tuesday, told *The Taos News* that making decisions with regard to the high school is often difficult. It's hard to envision what technology will be available in 10 years and how that should be incorporated into schools, he said.

But he said some of the improvements his firm is looking at are the cafeteria, kitchen, library, and science classrooms. Many hallways and classrooms date back to the 1950s and '60s, and he's looking at improvements to those as well.

He said it's also hard to predict what enrollment will look like in 10 years. Enrollment at the high school is down as of the past few years, he said, because the population in Taos County is changing and students have more options for high school than they used to. Now, students can attend charter schools such as Vista Grande and Taos Academy.

"We've been stuck at the high school because they don't know where they're going to be in 10 years," he said. "Do we need to make it smaller?"

The development of the plan includes staff surveys, community input meetings and facility assessments.

Superintendent Rod Weston told board members at the meeting Tuesday he sees this as a chance to design infrastructure around THS' unique needs. He said that because the school has trouble recruiting math teachers, for example, classrooms might have folding walls so that teachers who are particularly good at teaching a certain facet of math can teach more than one classroom at once.

"It's really an opportunity for faculty to say, 'What do we want to do with this space?'" he said. "It's kind of nice that it's all coming together at the same time."

Patterson said recent improvements at the high school include small-scale projects such as the student-run cafe and the welding shop.

He said with the new options students have for high school in Taos County, it's important that the high school's facilities stay up-to-date so as to make it an attractive option for incoming students.

"All the schools that exist in Taos are competing for students, and their funding is based on the number of students they have," he said.