

Hartford Building takes shape



Eric Crump/H-F Chronicle

The building village officials have said will “transform downtown Homewood” is starting to take shape. Walls appeared recently, as this March 23 photo shows. The four-story building will house the Stoney Point Grill on the first floor and three floors of apartments above.



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D233 sells bonds for culinary, science upgrades at H-F High

BY MARILYN THOMAS
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The District 233 school board took the first step to sell a maximum of \$20 million in tax-exempt bonds to underwrite major improvements for the culinary and science programs at Homewood-Flossmoor High School.

The board voted unanimously at its meeting Tuesday, March 15, to go into the market while interest rates are low. Although the paperwork will begin now, the plan gives a three-year window for spending the funds.

The plan will not raise taxes, said Steve Anderson, chair of the board's finance committee. Because the district has been paying down its primary debt from construction of the field house, it can take on additional borrowing. The new debt would replace the field house debt, keeping the tax levy the same as it has been, so taxpayers will not see an increase on their tax bills, he explained.

“If we don't do this and go for the money later, it'll cost us more because interest rates are rising,” said board president Gerald Pauling. “We're trying to take advantage of the low interest rate environment to give ourselves flexibility to the funds.”

Superintendent Von Mansfield advised the board to move forward. He said the board should learn from its experience with the construction of the new Performing Arts Center. A delay of more than a year meant about \$4 million in additional costs. That construction project was paid for with the district's financial reserves.

Superintendent-elect Scott Wakeley said the new funding can be spent only on building improvements. The plan is to update the culinary space in North Building with an industrial kitchen and additional classroom changes. That work should be

completed by July 2023. The culinary program has been turning students away because of limited space.

Discussions are starting now on needs for a new science wing that will best accommodate 21st century science education, Wakeley told board members. Once science classes move from B wing in the South Building, that space would be redesigned for other needs.

Mansfield said H-F has been updating science equipment, but a major renovation of the science wing hasn't been done in probably 30 years.

Wakeley said the plans will move H-F forward so that future generations of students have access to not only outstanding teaching but facilities with “creative maker spaces and creative curriculum opportunities with CTE (career and technical education), with math, with science because it's not just taught in isolation. Everything is integrated. All those things need to be presented and the science staff is already starting the process.”

The board consensus was that the improvements should be made. The culinary arts improvements have been before board committees, but several asked about the science planning process and what it will entail. Board members Pam Jackson and Michelle Hoereth wanted to know how the district would be evaluating needs, and current and future resources.

Wakeley reassured them that planning work already has begun. Jennifer Hester, director of Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development, is assisting with the curriculum plans and faculty assessments, and Jim Patterson, director of Operations and Maintenance, has been assessing construction issues.

Anderson said it could be eight months before the plans for a science wing are finalized.

2 Homewood officers hurt in chase

BY CHRONICLE STAFF

Two Homewood police officers were transported to the hospital Friday, March 11, after suffering non-life-threatening injuries in traffic accidents, according to Homewood Police Chief Denise McGrath.

The crashes occurred while the officers were helping Glenwood police apprehend two car theft suspects, she said.

Glenwood police said the incident began about noon when someone reported a suspicious vehicle at an area gas station. Police determined the vehicle was reported stolen.

The car was located and the suspects, two juveniles, were apprehended. One of

them was in possession of a loaded handgun that was altered to fire automatically and equipped with an extended magazine, Glenwood police said.

What was believed to be evidence from other crimes reportedly was found in the stolen vehicle.

The suspects were turned over to the juvenile court system for charges including vehicle theft, resisting arrest and weapons offenses.

“We believe that the alert citizen's observations and actions of responding officers likely prevented a serious crime, and did take a dangerous weapon off the street,” Glenwood police said in a Facebook post.