

## GMCS tackles new capital improvements

Written by By Molly Ann Howell Sun Correspondent  
Thursday, 30 December 2021 09:18

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Students are currently on winter break, but the Gallup-McKinley County Schools District is looking forward to the future.

During the Dec. 13 school board meeting, Assistant Superintendent of Business Services Jvanna Hanks gave the board an update on all of the construction projects the district currently has going on.

Before Hanks began her presentation, GMCS Superintendent Mike Hyatt told the board that about \$100 million worth of improvements needed to be done within the district. He noted that many of the projects hadn't been done yet because of a lack of state funding.

Many schools will be getting new roofs, including Tse Yi Gai High, Tohatchi Middle School, Chee Dodge Elementary, Crownpoint Middle School, David Skeet Elementary, and Navajo Middle School.

"We will just continue to push on this front to get these projects moving and continuing," Hanks said.

Besides construction on the school buildings, the paving of sidewalks and parking lots will

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continue district-wide. New HVAC systems will also be placed in many of the schools.

Hyatt said that he actually went to multiple schools in the district to see what improvements needed to be made.

“We actually went through and went to several different schools to look at the good, the bad, and the ugly, so we could decide and kind of make a standard for our school district,” Hyatt stated.

For example, Hyatt mentioned the need for bigger classrooms, hallways, and gyms in many of the schools. He specifically called attention to Red Rock Elementary, which will be getting a bigger gym installed because the current one doesn’t have enough bleacher space for the whole school to be inside at the same time.

Board member Chris Mortensen commented on the gym construction.

“If there’s anything we need in this school district, it’s more gym space,” Mortensen said. “That’s something we definitely use.”

Board member Kevin Mitchell noted that the bigger schools often have the bigger gyms, but when you see them on TV, the stands are only half-full, whereas GMCS almost always has packed gyms for sporting events. He suggested that schools get funding for their gyms based on how many fans show up to the games, rather than how many students go to the school.

The discussion soon turned to the athletic fields. Hanks said new turf would be put on many of the fields, and exterior lighting will be installed, including on the athletic fields.

After Hanks went over her presentation, Hyatt explained the district’s current situation with Angelo Di Paolo Memorial Stadium.

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“The company that we’re in litigation with is Loan Mountain Construction, an absolute[ly] terrible company that we’ve had terrible experience[s] with,” Hyatt stated.

In Nov. 2020, the district entered into a contract agreement with Lone Mountain Contracting, a construction company based out of Bosque Farms, N.M.

The agreement stated that the stadium updates would be done in time for the May graduations. However, according to Vanessa Duckett, the school district’s public relations supervisor, the company just stopped working and asked for more money to complete the project.

The contract is scheduled to end in June 2023, but no work has been done on the stadium, and because of this, GMCS decided to sever the relationship.

“Allegedly the owner [of the company] was from our community.” Hyatt said. “[He] acted like he was a service to our students and [he was] absolutely not.

“We deserve better than that, and we will work extra hard to make sure we never come across a company like that again.”

The case has not gone to court yet, but Hyatt said the district might be able to get some of the money back from the contractor.

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