

Out with the old, in with the new

Written by By Molly Ann Howell Sun Correspondent
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Plans for a new Red Rock Elementary building in the works

Red Rock Elementary was built in 1966, and now, almost 60 years later, a new building will soon replace it.

During the May 2 Gallup McKinley County Schools Board of Education meeting, GMCS Assistant Superintendent of Businesses Services Jvanna Hanks III told the board about the updates.

First though, she explained how a school gets selected for a remodel.

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“The district is really not able select the schools that we renovate,” Hanks said. “The renovation is based on a New Mexico state formula. It tells us where our schools are in comparison to the rest of the schools evaluated in the state.”

Hanks said that Red Rock Elementary has reached “beyond its life capacity,” although it’s still safe to occupy. She also reassured the board that it’s well-maintained.

The new building will be constructed on the same property. Hanks said it would take 16 months to build the new school, and six months to tear down the old school and redo the landscaping around the newly-minted structure.

Hanks said the district has been listening to parents and students’ concerns on what a new state-of-the-art school would need to better serve everyone.

“ ... [We’ve] looked at the traffic issues that are of concern, we’ve looked at the space in classrooms that are of concern, [and] we’ve looked at the gym size and placement ...,” Hanks said.

Hanks explained that the construction plans include bigger classrooms with more storage for teachers and students, and a gym that will fit the entire school in it for assemblies. The discovery center, which is what the district calls its libraries now, will feature 21st century technology.

Carpet will be a thing of the past, and will only be rolled out for the discovery center.

“We want to make sure that the spaces we’re creating are created in order to facilitate student learning,” Hanks said.

As for the outside of the new building, Roxy Flanders, the district’s facilities/planning director, said that her department would begin taking down the school’s playground to make room for the

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new building this summer. She said they would try to relocate some of the playground equipment so kids will still have something to play on during the rebuild.

Hanks said drought-resistant plants will be used in the landscaping around the building.

The new elementary will also be a geothermal building. Hanks said the new system would be cost-efficient for the district.

“It’s a type of heating and air conditioning system that is low-cost to maintain, has a long life-term, and [it] also allows us to introduce a UV-type filtration without the added cost of the many different things for filters that we have throughout the district,” Hanks said.

The project will go out to bid in August.

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