



Board prepares for referendum

Officials hire architects, consider PR specialist

By JANE FORD-STEWART

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Muskego — An architectural firm will develop site plans and cost estimates for the four school improvement options the Muskego-Norway School Board is considering.

Eppstein Uhen Architects was awarded a \$12,500 contract by the School Board on July 20 to further refine the four options that include renovating some schools, possibly building others and reducing the number of elementary schools from the current five to either four or three.

The School Board also will decide whether to hire a public relations specialist to help it get meaningful public input on the options. The specialist also would help get information to voters to help them decide if the district should go forward with any of the options.

All four options require a referendum that might be on the November 2010 ballot. That date was recommended by Kit Dailey, a public information specialist with Eppstein Uhen, speaking to the board July 20. The November election should have a large turnout due to the gubernatorial election, she said.

Dailey has helped other boards come to a consensus with their communities about potential building projects and passing building referendums.

School Board President Jim Schaefer was asked after the meeting if there was a potential conflict of interest to use a public information person from the same firm that may well get the contract to design any option that voters may eventually approve.

Schaefer said pushing more expensive options for the sake of higher architectural fees would be unethical and would probably not work because board members will be at input meetings.

"If we saw someone come in and twist things, I think we'd discontinue using that person," he said. That also would damage the firm's opportunity to get the final work, if there is a project, Schaefer said.

But he strongly doubted anything like that would happen.

"We've had a longstanding relationship with Eppstein; it did the high school," he said, referring to the \$36.6 million renovation and building addition that doubled the size of the school. The work was approved in 2001.

"We've been very happy with their work," Schaefer said.

While the architectural contract approved for Eppstein is to fill in more of the details of the four options, the School Board has not determined whether it would go with that architectural firm or go out for bids if voters eventually approve a project, Schaefer said.

If the board hires Dailey, it could be on an hourly basis or at a flat fee of \$14,000 for services that would extend to whenever the board might decide to go to a referendum.

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