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## School officials: All options on table to improve facilities, ease crowding

By JULIA MARTINEZ staff writer Jan 30, 2017

All options are on the table to improve school facilities and ease overcrowding in the Ellensburg School District, school officials said last week.

Several board members addressed the ideas coming out of the district's Community Capital Planning Committee, a group created to offer a recommendation to the board on the district's 40-year plan priorities.

"They're considering all sorts of ideas right now, it's more of a brainstorming that's going on," Superintendent Paul Farris said, emphasizing that nothing has been decided yet.

An idea that would convert the district from a three-transition school to a four-transition was introduced by Lincoln Elementary Principal John Graf earlier this month. All elementary schools will be K-4, the middle school would be 5-7, a portable city would be set up adjacent to the high school and house grades 8-9, and the high school would be 10-12 and share facilities with students in the portables.

Jonathan Leonard, who sits on the CCPC, pointed out that the committee is a consensus committee, so the final idea presented to the board will be based on the consensus of the entire committee.

Graf's idea, he said, was just one of 13 ideas being presented.

"It just happened to be the one that the paper caught onto," he said.

Curtis Bull, another CCPC member, said the committee wants to hear all the ideas and consider all of them.

"Getting this word out about doing things that are now to prevent this, perhaps upcoming crisis with class sizes, can only help the district and its voters moving towards a new elementary school," he said. "These ideas get people thinking, which is good and it may be that a new school sooner than what has been projected in the past would happen because of that, which I see as something positive."

The CPCC will discuss the idea and other questions at its next meeting at 5:30 p.m. on Feb. 1 at Ellensburg High School. Comments from observers are scheduled for 6:30 p.m.

## Solar panels

The Ellensburg School Board on Wednesday heard from Howard Lyman, a representative from a local environmental group called Our Environment, who asked the board to consider looking at ways to incorporate solar panels into any new construction in the district.



Lyman said he felt as if there was a missed opportunity to discuss the installation of solar panels on Morgan Middle School, but would like his group to be included in discussions over new construction. With the exponential growth in Ellensburg, he said, a new school will be needed sooner than what is currently planned.

“It may or may not happen,” he said about installing solar panels. “But the conversation needs to be had.”

Lyman offered the group’s services to the board.

“What we would like for you to do is look at us as a resource to be used in the areas where you do not have the time or the energy to do those things, we’re willing to step forward,” he said.

The board asked Lyman to look into eliminating Styrofoam trays in school lunchrooms.

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**Julia Martinez**