

Eau Claire Area School District Referendum...

an Update by Superintendent Dr. Ron Heilmann

August 22, 2011

On April 5, 2011, voters in the Eau Claire Area School District (ECASD) approved a \$51.9 million referendum that will enable the District to make significant improvements at three of its elementary schools and one middle school. These improvements will address both overcrowding situations and the renovation needs of some of the aging facilities.

On hand to provide a referendum and construction update was ECASD Superintendent and fellow Rotarian **Ron Heilmann**. According to Heilmann, the plan is to start with the three elementary school projects first and then to move into the DeLong Middle School project next summer.

One of the first major decisions was whether or not to hire a Construction Manager. After debating the issue, the School Board decided to hire Camosy Construction from Kenosha. Their role is to act as an advisor only and they will not be permitted to bid on any aspect of the project. The District has also retained the same architect that was used during the time leading up to the referendum.

The Putnam and Robbins elementary projects are moving along on schedule, while the Sherman project has a couple of issues that must still be worked out with the City of Eau Claire and Town of Union. Heilmann expects the ground breaking on these elementary school projects to take place in late September or early October. He is pleased that the projects can proceed without being a disruption to classroom activities.



Eau Claire Area School
District Superintendent
Ron Heilmann
(file photo)

In addition to talking about the referendum that did pass, Heilmann also commented on the District's early learning needs. In April, the second referendum, that would have authorized the ECASD to acquire a building for an early learning center, failed. However, according to Heilmann, the early learning center needs are still there, and must be addressed in some way. It was not something that was simply on a "wish list".

Heilmann provided an overview of the various components of early learning, which include early childhood special education, the Headstart program, and the early learning offered at a combination of six school district sites and 19 other community sites. According to Heilmann, there are approximately 900 kids being served and the District is scrambling for space... they are virtually out of space. Nevertheless, the District will continue to look for alternatives to meet the early learning needs. This could include leasing some space, moving students around by making some always unpopular boundary changes, or even using some of the space created by the newly remodeled elementary school classrooms.

Heilmann then responded to questions on a variety of District and education issues.
