

## **ALBANY POOL PROJECT UPDATE**

### **New Business Plan to Meet the Economic Crisis**

*By Superintendent Marla Stephenson*  
*February 3, 2009*

A year ago, when the Albany community voted for a bond to replace the leaking swimming pool, plans were developed to build a new aquatic center and classrooms. This project has remained on target and within the budget, as we are poised to offer the bonds for sale — and no additional taxation for pool costs is under consideration. But with new economic realities, now is the right time for the school district to again consider pool economics and design choices.

In light of the worsening State budget crisis which impacts all school projects, and a volatile market for selling the \$10 million pool bonds — the AUSD School Board (meeting 2/3/09) has supported the Superintendent's call for a new business plan based on current economic realities, prior to further work on the project.

At the Superintendent's request, and with School Board support, former Board President, Charlie Blanchard, has agreed to chair an *ad hoc Pool Task Force* appointed by the Superintendent, working publicly, in consultation with district staff and the Pool Committee. This citizens committee will assist the District in developing a new comprehensive plan for the pool project to:

- Minimize operating costs (as 'revenue neutral' as possible), by maximizing 'green' construction, and cooperating with the City of Albany
- Keep Albany High School classrooms in the project budget
- Be within the budget (\$10,000,000) and include a larger District Contingency Reserve (9%) for unforeseen circumstances

***Public decision-making.*** All decisions about the Albany Pool are made publicly by the AUSD School Board. The Pool Bond language explicitly states the need for pool(s) to serve students and the Albany community, new classrooms, and requires that the School Board determine which projects are most appropriate.

The public has participated in 7 public Board meetings where pool budget and design options have been considered. This is the same process followed for every other Board-directed, bond-supported construction project (including the new high school and middle schools, Cougar Field, and elementary school updates),

The Bond Oversight Committee will be responsible for review of the expenditure of all bond funds, *only after the bonds have been sold, later this year*. Until bonds have been sold, all financial oversight remains in the hands of the School Board.

***Careful management of the pool project.*** As with all school construction projects, state and bond regulations have required careful management of this project. The Board has

also actively included Albany citizens in the project at every stage, and has maintained strict project oversight.

To date, at the direction of the Board, district staff has taken these steps prior to selling bonds that will finance this project:

- Completed hazard, topographical and geotechnical surveys
- Interviewed multiple experienced vendors and hired an architect, business consultant and project manager to outline the proposed project.
- Located outside sources of funding for portions of the project, to maximize what can be built.
- Held 9 public meetings of the Pool Committee (parents, swimmers, the AHS principal and pool staff, Adult Ed and neighbors) to advise the district on the design of the aquatic center.

You are invited to comment on pool issues at all meetings of the Pool Task Force (pool economics), Pool Committee (pool design) and the School Board (pool planning). Send comments to [poolboc@albany.k12.ca.us](mailto:poolboc@albany.k12.ca.us). For meeting dates and minutes, please see the District website at <http://AUSDAlbanyPool.notlong.com>