

Foothills high school site scrapped

Ryan McCarthy, Marysville Appeal-Democrat, 4-21-10

Naturally occurring asbestos, found by a state agency at the planned site of a new high school in the foothills, has led Marysville Joint Unified School District officials to seek new property for the school.

Construction was supposed to start in the spring at the original site near Foothill Intermediate School, said Mark Allgire, assistant superintendent of business services.

But the asbestos, along with problems including the impact on wetlands, led the school district to look at other property in the area around Fruitland Road.

"Enough's enough," Allgire said of the asbestos, wetlands and other issues.

The state Department of Toxic Substances Control discovered the asbestos during soils testing of the site.

No target date is set for completion of the new high school, Allgire said.

Trustee Bernie Rechs, a foothills resident, said he expects securing a second site will add about 18 months to the project.

The new property will have to undergo the same reviews as the original site, he said.

"Nothing you do with the state takes 10 minutes," Rechs said. "It takes months."

A new high school in the foothills is a big deal for residents there, he noted.

"They're only a few places where you can gather as a community," Rechs said.

Trustee Sandy Fonley said some students now face three hours each day on the bus to get to Marysville High School.

"It's a ridiculous use of the students' time," Fonley said.

She also spoke about the difference between the culture of Marysville and the foothills. Fonley said a new high school can better reflect the foothills culture.

"You don't run to the 7-Eleven to get a Pepsi," Fonley said of life in the foothills.

Trustees in 2008 had approved buying 5.6 acres to accommodate plans to convert Foothill Intermediate into a high school. The existing Foothill Intermediate site covers 20 acres and would have been undersized for a high school, officials said.

Trustee Jeff Boom had said that even with the additional acres that "It's going to be fairly tight" to have a high school on 25 acres at the Fruitland Road site.