

Press Release



Battle Ground Public Schools

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Prairie High ‘sewerified’ after 31 years; Next step: Fix drain fields for athletics

Sewers and septic systems might not be a fun, exciting or inviting topic of conversation in most circles – but they can have important implications for the environment and, in the case of Prairie High School, for the future of campus athletic facilities.

When PHS opened in 1979 in semi-rural Brush Prairie, there was no sewer line nearby, so one of the largest septic systems in Clark County was installed as part of the school’s infrastructure, most recently serving about 1,500 students and staff.

The system was in use until Saturday afternoon, Aug. 28, 2010. That’s when the school was tied in to the Clark Regional Wastewater District’s north-south line that a year ago had been installed about 700 feet away from the school along the western edge of PHS property. That extension was built to serve the Winco store being built across Northeast 119th Street.

The \$189,000 project – not including hookup fees -- was done by Advanced Excavating Specialists LLC of Kalama, Wash.

The money: The federal economic stimulus effort in 2009 included a “Qualified School Construction Bonds” program for certain kinds of projects, with the federal government paying all or most of the interest to the bondholders.

In November 2009, the Battle Ground School Board approved the sale of \$3,999,000 in those bonds for projects related to safety, health and Title IX gender equity in athletic facilities. Parking lot improvements at Prairie and new or

upgraded alarm and video systems at some buildings around the district were also part of the plan. Those projects are under way this summer.

The Prairie High septic system worked well over the years, but septic systems can and do fail, with negative impact on groundwater and streams. The sewer line extension past the school and the federal construction-bonds program made it inviting to hook the school to the line and dismantle one of the largest septic systems in Clark County.

There's another benefit: the 3- to 4-acre drain field will be reclaimed and converted to athletic fields. Much needs to be done in preparation for that, including six months of no action at all to allow for draining. It is expected the fields will be ready for use in the fall of 2012.

As for the sewer hookup, one PHS staff member considered it this week, smiled, and said, "I noticed the toilets have been flushing more efficiently."



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