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MEMORANDUM

Reference: 4878

To: Josh McCubbin, Del Norte County Schools

From: Ward L. Stover, PE

Date: 31 October 2024

Subject: Review for CEQA Exemption – Del Norte High School PAC Building and Parking

The following actions are recommended for the Del Norte County Unified School District Board to take to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for the proposed Del Norte High School Performing Arts Center. This must occur at a scheduled Board meeting.

1. Approve the proposed project as indicated on attached Exhibits 1, 2, and 3; and as described in the brief project description below.
2. Find that the project is subject to CEQA.
3. Find that the project is categorically exempt from CEQA Guidelines (Class 14 – Minor Additions to Schools) and that the categorical exemption is not barred by one of the exceptions set forth in Section 15300.2 of the CEQA Guidelines.
4. Direct staff to prepare and file a Notice of Exemption with the County Clerk and the State Office of Planning and Research Clearinghouse.

Project Description

The proposed project is located at 1301 El Dorado Street, Crescent City, CA. It is located within the City of Crescent City on a previously disturbed site immediately west of the football field. Attachments 1, 2, and 3 indicate the project size and scope. Work generally consists of the following:

1. Construction of an 800-seat performing arts center on Del Norte High School's existing campus. The building footprint is approximately 25,900 square feet.
2. Construction of 206 parking spaces adjacent to the proposed PAC and existing football field.
3. Demolition and relocation of existing tennis courts and shot put area. Tennis courts to be relocated east of the small gym while the shot put relocated north easterly of its existing location.
4. Relocation of underground utilities.

Finding that Projects are subject to CEQA

All activities are subject to CEQA unless the following are met:

1. The activity does not involve the exercise of discretionary powers by a public agency;
2. The activity will not result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environments; or
3. The activity is not a project as defined in Section 15378 of the Guidelines.

The projects do not meet any of the above so are subject to CEQA.

Categorical Exemptions

Class 14, Minor Additions to Schools. Class 14 consists of minor additions to existing schools within existing school grounds where the addition does not increase original student capacity by more than 25% or ten classrooms, whichever is less. The addition of portable classrooms is included in this exemption.

The proposed PAC constitutes one (1) specialized classroom and does not increase student capacity.

Section 15300.2 Exceptions Review

The six exceptions that bar Categorical Exemptions were reviewed. Potential parking displacement to offsite areas for football games and potential impacts due to on-site tree removal were quickly evaluated.

Vehicles were physically counted in the gravel parking area and grass north of the tennis courts during two large football games in Fall 2023. One was against Eureka High during homecoming with no rain on a Saturday evening, while the other was against St Bernards on a Friday with no rain. Vehicles haphazardly parked in the gravel and grass areas totaled 250 and 244 respectively. Much of the on-site paved parking area was filled during these two games. However, vacant spaces counted in the paved area in front of the High School/College of the Redwoods totaled 62 and 65 respectively. The lost gravel area parking offset by the remaining available paved parking totaled 188 and 179 respectively. The proposed 206 new paved parking spaces exceeds the total existing need for onsite parking during football games. PAC events are not planned simultaneously with the football games.

The Crescent City and Del Norte County on-site parking regulations were reviewed as a guide. The School District is its own government entity and not required to fully adapt to the City zoning regulations. The County requires 1 parking space per 3.5 fixed seats while the City requires 1 parking space per 5 fixed seats for theaters. This results in 229 and 160 spaces respectively. It has been determined that on-site parking needs will be provided for this project. The parking count also indicates that traffic generated by performances at the PAC will not exceed existing traffic by existing football games.

Galea Wildlife Consulting was retained to determine if the proposed project would pose impacts to wildlife with removal of trees on the proposed site. No records or physical observation of threatened or endangered wildlife species were found in or near the project area.

Based on the review performed above, no impacts have been identified as it applies to location, cumulative impact, significant effect, scenic highways, hazardous waste sites, and historical resources so no exception precludes the Categorical Exemption.