

Edwardsville School Board Approves High School Commons and Restroom Renovation

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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EDWARDSVILLE - During their regular meeting on Monday, March 25, 2024, the Edwardsville Community Unit School District #7 Board of Education approved plans for the [Edwardsville High School commons expansion](#) and restroom renovation.

The renovation will add 8,000 square feet to the existing EHS commons. This new area will include a grab-and-go “Tiger Bites” area where students can purchase snack options, space for studying and events, and [renovated restrooms](#). The Board voted to approve expansion contract awards for bid packages. Bob Paty and Scott Ahart voted no.

The restrooms have been the center of debate for many parents and community members. The all-gender restrooms will include single-user stalls with sinks in an open corridor. There will be two other traditionally gendered bathrooms in the school.

There were several speakers during the March 25 Board meeting, and a little over half spoke in opposition to the restrooms. Opinions ranged from safety concerns to anti-transgender sentiments.

“I don’t have a problem with the design, to be honest,” Paty said before the vote. “My bigger concern gets to the heart of, again, back to the court of public opinion, have we done our due diligence and made sure that we have solicited everybody? Because it is a change. It is a significant change, and have we done our due diligence to make sure that we have gotten everybody’s input?...I don’t want my vote to be construed as being political on one side or the other. I still come back to why I’m voting no for this, because I do feel strongly about how the process has been handled, because I think the process, at the end of the day, regardless of how many people were upset about it, people need to walk away and feel like we were open and honest from the beginning.”

Paty also raised concerns with how the bid process was handled. Pfund Construction put in a bid for the carpentry of the project, but Kristen Pfund, the Chief Experience Officer for the company, is on the Board of Education. Pfund said the Facilities Committee discarded the bid after realizing the conflict of interest. But she encouraged the Board to solicit more bids from other companies instead of awarding the project to Holland General Contractors, who was the only other bidder.

The Board of Education voted unanimously to deny the bid for Holland General Contractors. President Jill Bertels then made a motion to approve the rest of the expansion contract awards. Paty and Ahart voted no. Everyone else voted yes.

This means the proposed project will move forward as planned. As of right now, the project will be completed by August 2025 by Holland Construction Services for a total of \$6,844,242.

