

\$5M in hand, Elizabethton schools ready to begin work on new stadium

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ELIZABETHTON — The Elizabethton City School System has \$5 million more money in its accounts today.

Superintendent Edwin Alexander told the school board on Thursday that Beth Wilson, the school system's finance director, had just returned from Elizabethton City Hall with a check for \$5 million.

The check is the proceeds of a capital projects bond issue. It was released after the City Council authorized the budget transfer during its meeting last week. The money will be used to construct a new athletic complex and music room at Elizabethton High School.

With the money in the bank, the school board voted unanimously to approve Kingsport contractor **GoinsRashCain** as the construction manager for both the athletic complex and the music room and classroom addition. The cost of GRC's bid was \$398,340.

Assistant Superintendent Richard VanHuss said GRC was recommended for several reasons, even though it was not the low bidder. JASA General Contractors of Blountville had bid \$341,470. VanHuss said some of the factors considered were GRC's experience in stadium construction, including the new stadium in Johnson City.

The projects are expected to take 10 months, and GRC was the only one of the three finalists to cap their general administration costs at 10 months. The board was told the cap provides the best guarantee of controlling project costs without a cost overrun.

VanHuss also gave a timeline on the projected construction. He said the first activity will be in June, when a new parking lot will be made in a triangular plot of undeveloped land next to the track and softball field. He said the new parking lot should have between 300 and 320 spaces. Ground should be broken on the new stadium a few weeks later. Construction on the new music room won't start until August or September.

The board also took the opportunity Thursday night to honor the Elizabethton High School girls basketball team for winning the state tournament this month. Coach Len Dugger said "I have never been with a group who put everyone else on the team ahead of themselves." He went on to say "their work ethic has been tremendous." He praised the only senior on the team, Sarah Bradley, for being the glue that bonded the team together.

The board also recognized the Elizabethton High School Cheerleaders for winning the Sportsmanship and Spirit Award at the basketball tournament.

In other matters, the board deliberated on amendments to several policy statements. The board voted 4-1, with Chairwoman Rita Booher casting the opposing vote, on an additional sentence on the Executive Committee policy.

The board unanimously voted against changing the purchasing policy. Booher argued that the change would be micromanaging, while Board Member Connie Baker said it was the board's responsibility to keep abreast of expenditures, saying projects such as the construction of the recent board room had cost well above \$10,000.

The board also approved a change on its tenure policy brought about by a change in state law.