

District puts arts center on hold

By Nick Baptista / The Valley Springs News/ 9/28/2012

Plans to move forward with construction of a 501-seat performing arts center at Calaveras High School have been put on hold.

Calaveras Unified School District trustees back in May voted 4-1 to move forward with the long awaited performing arts center, which was the centerpiece of a \$13.5 million bond measure approved by voters in 2006.

The \$5.4 million performing arts center plan was contingent upon receiving \$1.2 million in state funding, which continues to be questionable since the state has been unable to sell bonds that would help fund the CHS and other statewide school construction projects, CUSD Superintendent Mark Campbell said during a presentation about the state of the district at Thursday's meeting of the Rotary Club of West Calaveras.

The economic climate has changed "radically" in the six years since the Measure A bond issue was passed, Campbell said.

The district has been receiving approximately \$1 million a year in new development fees back in 2006 and that money along with matching state funds and the \$13.5 million in Measure A monies were projected to go toward a total of \$22 million in district construction projects.

In addition to questions concerning the reliability of state funding, development fees have dried up in the meantime with the district receiving less than \$100,000 a year from that source, Campbell said.

All of the district-wide construction projects except the performing arts center were completed and the CHS center was downsized from \$7.7 million to \$5.4 million to keep costs within the remaining Measure A bond monies and anticipated state and new development fee funding.

Measure A and matching state funds have been used for 16 new classrooms, a joint county/school library, a new playground and landscaping at Valley Springs Elementary School, a new swimming pool at Calaveras High, 12 new classrooms, playing field upgrades and a new administration building at Toyon Middle School, a complete upgrade of the district's technology infrastructure, and new playgrounds at San Andreas Elementary and Jenny Lind Elementary schools.

With too many uncertainties at the state and local level, the school board decided not to move forward with construction of the performing arts center at this time and explore other options, Campbell said, including whether the remaining Measure A funds should be spent on other construction projects within the district.