

SK pool costs go up another \$479,235

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The South Kitsap School District is “capturing lessons learned” after experiencing another costly setback in the reconstruction of the high school swimming pool.

The board voted 4-1 in favor of a change order to the construction contract with Christensen Inc. for the amount of \$479,235. The money was subtracted from a 10 percent contingency totaling \$844,805 that had been set aside in the contract to help offset potential additional costs.

It’s another nearly half-million dollars of added costs that superintendent Tim Winter said “is not something I have been looking forward to bringing to the board. It’s already beyond what was planned for six or seven years ago.”

The money will be used to address issues with the pool’s main drain after original construction drawings indicated a connection that was not there. It will also address a new water distribution system after it was determined that the current water inlet piping was unconventional and in poor condition.

It had previously been recommended by the Department of Health that a new water distribution system be installed, but the project team opted to reuse the existing systems. Board member Jeff Daily, who has been in opposition to the renovation, said it is the first he has heard of such a decision.

“We religiously tell the community that we follow the Department of Health,” he said. “We’ve had a lot of teeth-gnashing through a couple of years of following recommendations for

the Department of Health, and yet now we’ve been building a pool. If this report hadn’t been written, I wouldn’t have known that we had a variance.”

This is the second construction project in recent years to go significantly over budget after the renovation of the high school’s STEM classrooms experienced similar problems. It’s an issue that Winter said should have been tackled earlier. “There are things that we should have done differently, and I’m not talking about the architecture or the contract. I’m talking about the district,” he said.

Board member John Berg promised political fireworks by reminding the board that it would be inappropriate to discuss the merits of the contract, an issue that led to Daily filing a lawsuit against the board in February. Such a promise did not come

to pass. While Daily expressed concerns with parts of the project, he mostly fixated on the effect that the added cost would have on the students of the district.

“I understand that we have no option, but I’m not as forgiving... and the reason I’m not forgiving, folks, is because it’s another \$500,000 of kids’ money,” he said. “The issue isn’t whether we can find the money. The issue is we’re taking money away from kids.” The comments from Daily received positive reception from the board, including agreement from board member Kate Espy.

While construction remains relatively on schedule, Winter said that the issue now becomes rebuilding the district’s relationship with its people. “We need to build some trust that we can take a project on, and we can meet the expectations the community has set for us,” he said.