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# Meeting on Lincoln's future draws more than 100 people

By TOM LAWRENCE, For the Star-Herald

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The future of Lincoln Elementary School is under discussion, with four options detailed at a public meeting Monday night.

School district officials said they don't have a favorite option and said the one that will be put before voters in November 2010 will likely be a variation of one of the options discussed at Gering Senior High School. Gering School Board President Drew Lyon said he has just one wish: success at the polls.

"We can't have another failed bond," Lyon said after the meeting.

That's why the district is seeking extensive input from people. More than 100 people attended the meeting Monday. They listened to Lyon, Superintendent Don Hague and consultant George Breilig discuss what can be done with the school, which opened in 1929.



Consultant George Breilig, right, discusses the future of Lincoln Elementary School with audience members after Monday's meeting. Photo by Tom Lawrence

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Breilig laid out the four options:

- n A full renovation costing \$3.7 million.
- n A partial renovation with some new construction for \$8.9 million.
- n Building a new 43,872-square foot school at the current site, then tearing down the current school, for \$9 million.
- n Acquiring a new site and building a new school and converting Lincoln into another use. That would cost \$11 million. The audience peppered Breilig, who delivered a Power Point

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demonstration, with questions and comments and he seemed very receptive to them, often thanking people for their questions or insight.

People asked him about the plans for a new school, how parking and a playground would be dealt with, how long a new school would last compared to Lincoln's life and many other issues. Some questions were answered and other times people were thanked for bringing issues to the fore.

Brelig's firm, RB+B Architects of Fort Collins, Colo., has been studying the school since Dec. 22, 2008. It has had staffers tour and inspect the school, meet with the public and prepare material for the district to study.

He said while Lincoln is "actually very sound," it fails to meet the requirements for education today. Almost all the infrastructure – heat, plumbing and electrical – needs to be replaced. The classrooms are far too small, there are problems with the air quality and there are other concerns as well.

Lyon said the meeting was just a step in the process to develop a bond proposal that will win. Hague said 1,500 votes are needed to pass a bond.

"This is an important step in the process," Lyon said. "We need to deal with Lincoln Elementary. It's the oldest building in the system."

He said he has supported district proposals to deal with Lincoln four times in the past two decades and saw all of them fail. That can't happen this time, he said.

"If we have another 20-year wait, another school will need to be dealt with," Lyon said. "One generation's going to get stuck with a heckuva bill."

He said the district has learned a hard lesson about packing too many items and ideas on a bond election.

"There won't be any other issues on this bond," Lyon said. "We'll focus like a laser on Lincoln."

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