

## **GROSSMONT 12<sup>TH</sup> HIGH SCHOOL REPORT: PROGRESS AND HITCHES**

### **Who will attend new school remains in question**

By Bill Weaver, Chairman, Alpine High School Citizens Committee

On Wednesday, October 28<sup>th</sup>, Grossmont Union High School District (GUHSD) brought to the Alpine Elementary School auditorium its first public information forum about our new 12<sup>th</sup> GUHSD high school to be built here in Alpine at the old Lazy A Ranch site. The district is in the midst of negotiations to acquire the land upon which our new 12<sup>th</sup> GUHSD campus will be constructed, though questions remain—including who will attend the new school upon completion.

District Superintendent Robert Collins spoke first. He acknowledged how long Alpine has worked and waited in our quest to obtain a local high school and was very upbeat about how far this effort has progressed. The entire design team was introduced. Formal introductions were handled by Dena Johnson, GUHSD Facility Planner, the lead person at the district charged with orchestrating this new high school campus project. She introduced the four architects representing two different architectural firms, both hired by the GUHSD to design the 12<sup>th</sup> high school campus.

Other contributors and members of the GUHSD 12<sup>th</sup> high school Education Specifications and Design Teams were introduced. These are GUHSD staff members including the Principal and Vice-Principal of Granite Hills High School, and our own community members who are also designated as members of the Ed Specs & Design Teams. Alpine is represented on these teams by the Kumeyaay Native American Community and designees from the Alpine High School Citizens Committee. I am one of these members representing our local area's interests.

The planning process up to this point in time was briefly explained, including the EIR process, the land acquisition process, the need to bring in other regulatory agencies having jurisdiction such as the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Fish and Wildlife Authorities, Various County Agencies, and State Agencies. The involvement of the Division of the State Architect (DSA), and the Army Corp of Engineers jurisdiction was explained.

Why was it important that we understand the complexity of this process? Because it is a sensitive, and time consuming endeavor with many levels of red tape and agency review. There are many project acceptances required, even before the four architects can actually start to design the campus layout, its grading requirements, and plan the education facility buildings. This Lazy A Ranch site is beautiful, and problematic. It is home to a creek bed, protected wildlife species, and biologically sensitive plants and trees. It is because of the school campus site's beauty and desirability that makes our on-going patience worthwhile. The various agencies will be doing their reviews simultaneously in most respects, which should culminate at about the same time frame.

At the forum last Wednesday, the architects introduced to us to the conceptualized lay of the

entire campus and its education facility buildings, including athletic fields. The main impediment the architects have encountered, preventing them going ahead with the actual design work, is the existence of the Viejas Creek and its potential to fill its banks and flood. Because of Viejas Creek, drainage, and runoff are significant considerations, and the buildings will be required to be set back--away from or above any exposures to rising water levels.

This is simply all a part of what must be considered and engineered to mitigate hazards when a project of this size and scope moves forward. The realistic time line remains that this High School will open in September of 2013, if all goes well and the agencies involved are efficient in performing their duties.

Are there any hitches that we citizens could anticipate, that may loom under the radar? Yes, there are some. The most significant hitch is spelled out within the language of the Prop U bond itself. Prop U contains some language that leaves many community members uncertain and dubious about the GUHSD's plan regarding just whom our local Alpine/Blossom Valley area HS will ultimately serve. As the Prop U bond now stipulates, the new high school will not be capable of serving all of the Alpine or Blossom Valley area's high school students. It will only serve 800 area students.

Superintendent Collins briefly touched on this issue and the confusion it has created. The 800 student limitation straps the GUHSD administration's hands in dealing with the redistribution of students to the new 12<sup>th</sup> high school. How will this dilemma be addressed? Superintendent Collins stated that the entire GUHSD is in need of an attendance area or boundary study. He said that this problem isn't just an Alpine or Blossom Valley issue, but one that affects all the attendance areas of the full district. "It will be dealt with," the Superintendent assured.

The greatest part of this dilemma is that we are actually engaging in a conversation and discussing, "How are we going to populate the new 12<sup>th</sup> GUHSD high school campus that will be ready to open in September of 2013?"

Remember... Just one-to-two years prior to now, it was thought by many that we would never see the Proposition H planned 12<sup>th</sup> new GUHSD high school campus built at all. We should all be thankful that we will soon be deciding about who will be attending the new 12<sup>th</sup> GUHSD, Alpine and Blossom Valley Area High School campus.