

GH Phipps Construction Company, awarded the job of helping set budgets for a potential new high school, has community ties

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One member of the GH Phipps construction team remembers when the McDonalds finally opened up and there was nothing west of Pizza Hut. He walked the halls of Windsor High School more than 20 years ago. Now, he's excited for a chance to give back to the school that gave him so much.

This isn't Todd Ruff's first time investing in the community. Now the director of preconstruction for GH Phipps, Ruff pitched in his skills to help rebuild the Chimney Park ball fields after a tornado hit Windsor in 2008.

"I've basically been here my whole life," Ruff said. "My mom worked for Windsor Middle School for 23 years. That's a big part of Phipps' culture — being part of the community."

The guys behind the project

The Windsor-Severance Re-4 School District Board of Education awarded GH Phipps Construction Companies the job of helping to set budgets for a huge school construction project that might be on this fall's ballot. The board will vote this summer on whether to refer a bond program to the ballot.

An additional high school, capable of supporting 800-900 kids would, if approved, be located in Severance. Construction would begin in 2017.

Ruff is blown away by the commercial and industrial development in Windsor — the same development requiring a new school.

"It's more than doubled [in size] since I graduated, but it still has that small-town feel," Ruff said. Tim Hendricks, the general manager of the potential project, lives in Windsor. After growing up in a small town in Nebraska, Windsor seemed like a natural choice for him. As for the construction project, he's personally invested in the quality of the work and the price tag of the final product.

"I have two boys that will go through the system," Hendricks said. "There's longevity there.



Tim Hendricks (top) and
Todd Ruff (below)



Moving forward

Over the next months, GH Phipps will work with the school district and the design team to provide budgets, scope of work and ideas on what's feasible to help make the best decisions moving forward.

The next step will be the first design meeting. Once plans become more solid, cost estimates will become available.

"We'll take those conceptual sketches everyone saw at the community meeting and put dollars to them," Hendricks said.

So far, only two cost estimates are available. Renovations to the existing high school are estimated to cost \$20 million. The estimated cost of having GH Phipps on the project, with labor, insurance, meetings, emergency work and more, excluding any construction costs, comes to \$1,136,667.

Beyond the project

GH Phipps makes it a point to involve the community, especially those whom the project will impact. One of the reasons the school board gave for its interest in GH Phipps was their willingness to engage and teach the students.

The construction of a new school would be for the students. The process should serve the students, as well, Hendricks said.

This includes integrating CAD classes, shop classes, and engineering classes into the project itself. There are ways to get around liability issues, Hendricks said. Students can draw ideas up in the classroom, for example, to remain safe and involved. Hendricks plans to hold information sessions on mechanical and electrical systems for kids interested, as well as project management techniques for business classes.

At the community meeting Feb. 9, Windsor High School principal Michelle Scallon spoke on the importance of connecting the high school to college programs and vocations. Scallon specifically mentioned the Colorado State University veterinary program.

"It's in our best interest as a construction company to get the kids interested early," Hendricks said.

Since there will most likely be occupied campus construction, involving students can foster a learning environment beyond the classroom.

The biggest thing? It will give students a chance to ask questions they might not otherwise have thought of, Ruff said.

"You want to create an enjoyable product but also an enjoyable experience," Hendricks said.