Founded 1876

VICTORIA HIGH SCHOOL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION
1260 Grant Street
Victoria, B.C. V8T 1C2
www.vichigh.com

Update on the Seismic Upgrade/Renovation of Victoria High School October 29th, 2020

The Alumni Board of Directors' would like to provide an update on the project from the Alumni Associations' perspective.

The funding for the seismic / renovation project was announced by the Province of BC and School District 61(SD61) in June 2019. The $79.7 million dollar project was to achieve the goals of increasing student capacity, updating learning spaces, making the building seismically safe while also preserving the structure and heritage of the old building. Alumni were pleased to see that the outside facade would be preserved while accomplishing all the educational goals to serve future students. What was also clear to several Alumni present at the announcement was that refurbishing and enhancing the existing Memorial stadium and track and field were not included.

During the fall of 2019 and into the spring of 2020, SD61 conducted extensive consultations with the public, alumni, local community and the existing student body and staff. These consultations helped SD61 develop its construction plans as well as identify important elements various groups wanted to see in the seismically upgraded and expanded space. In addition to preserving the historical elements of the 1914 building, two projects, the development of an enhanced library and improvements to the existing auditorium and stage for Fine Arts productions, were included in the construction budget. Additional learning and teaching amenities were also identified through the consultation process and SD 61 continues to work hard to incorporate as many improvements as funding allows. Your Alumni Association's Board of Directors is confident that the project will result in new learning and teaching spaces geared to the needs of future students while preserving the heritage of the past.

One aspect of improvements to Vic High that is important to Alumni is the Stadium / Track and Field renovation / refurbishment. Since 2007 the Alumni Association has actively raised money towards the vision of developing an 8-lane competition track, a refurbished field with lights, a clubhouse, and a refurbished Memorial stadium. A concept drawing was developed and published to focus the fundraising and provide an inspiration for donations. Initially this vision / concept was costed at around 6 million dollars but the project in 2020, in its entirety, is now estimated to be well over 7 million dollars. A small, dedicated group of Alumni has continued to

work tirelessly to raise the funding for the project. Golf tournaments, sponsored events, auditorium seat sales, direct donations from alumni, and proposal submissions to public and private funders has raised $166,564.00 since 2007. The Alumni Association also played an important part in encouraging partnerships with Bay's United and the City of Victoria which resulted in total project funds of over $500,000.

This past summer, August 23rd, SD61 staff invited the Alumni Association to attend a partner meeting to discuss the outdoor amenities and provide feedback on the conceptual plan. During the meeting SD61 staff presented a concept of what they thought they could achieve in the outdoor space. (Concept attached.) SD61 staff was still working on the overall costing of the project and did not want to assume that Alumni and partners would be supportive before presenting to the SD61 Board. The meeting provided Alumni with the assurance that some of our vision would be achieved but that the 8-lane competition track was not part of the project. From this meeting Alumni concluded that SD 61 was doing all it could to accomplish enhanced facilities. The proposal included a new field, outdoor lighting, and a 2-lane walking track. Since the Alumni Association had not been able to raise funds that would pay for a substantial portion of the 7 million dollars cost and because the school administration and the district had felt that there were other outdoor athletic facilities that were affordable and preferred, the Alumni Association agreed to provide a letter of support to SD61. At the October 2020 meeting of the Alumni Association Board of Directors the current school principal provided the SD61's concept drawing and discussed the amenities that he thought would be accomplished. This concept is the one that has since appeared in the local press.

Clearly the Board of Directors is disappointed that we were not able to achieve the whole vision that included the 8-lane track. We have worked hard on this project for 13 years, but 7 million dollars is simply beyond our capacity to raise. However, the project was always presented as a concept / vision not a promise. The realization of the project was always contingent on our ability to raise the funds. In addition, the existing track and field are not usable in their current condition. Students need facilities now, not down the road when more money might be available.

We are disappointed that we have not been able to secure the whole vision. At the same time, we are heartened by the good work that is being done to refurbish our much-loved school and its surrounding amenities. As an alumni association it is our job to support the school and help it achieve its goals. By supporting the SD61 proposal we believe that we are accomplishing our mandate.

Respectfully,

Donna Lomas, Class of 77
Chair of the Board of Directors Vic High Alumni Association