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News Release

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PPS Board votes to open two middle schools, with contingencies

The Portland Public Schools Board of Education voted Tuesday to move forward with opening two middle schools intended to give students in Oregon’s largest, most diverse school district equal access to quality academic programs, but will also take more time in assessing boundary and environmental issues.

The Board passed Resolution 5528, by a 7-0 vote, aimed at opening Roseway Heights and Harriet Tubman with students in grades 6-8. The goal is to open both schools by the 2018-19 school year, but two amendments that were passed unanimously could affect the timing.

One amendment, presented by Board member Rita Moore, calls for a comprehensive health and safety assessment at Harriet Tubman. The campus on North Flint Avenue will be tested for lead, radon, asbestos and other hazardous material, along with the indoor and outdoor air quality and to check for possible ground slippage in a hill near school grounds.

As the health assessment is going on, the amendment also calls for the district and Superintendent Guadalupe Guerrero to concurrently explore alternative middle school sites in the Albina neighborhood. Although the goal of opening the middle schools by 2018-19 remains, the board and Guerrero acknowledged that the challenges could force PPS to defer the move until 2019-20.

The board also passed an amendment that called for deferring action in setting the boundaries for the new middle schools, and the eight schools that would be turned into kindergarten-to-fifth-grade elementary schools that send students to them. The proposal had called for Boise-Eliot/Humboldt, Irvington, Martin Luther King Jr., and Sabin to convert from K-8 to K-5 schools that send students to Harriet Tubman, and for Vestal, Scott, Lee and Rose City Park to become K-5 schools that feed Roseway Heights.

The amendment, set forth by Board member Scott Bailey, called for further study on the “underlying assumptions” used in the proposed boundaries, including the impact of budget and staffing. In addition to two middle and eight elementary schools, the proposed boundary changes would have affected Beverly Cleary K-8, Alameda K-5, Beaumont Middle School and Madison and Grant high schools

Portland Public Schools recognizes the diversity and worth of all individuals and groups and their roles in society. It is the policy of the Portland Public Schools Board of Education that there will be no discrimination or harassment of individuals or groups on the grounds of age, color, creed, disability, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex or sexual orientation in any educational programs, activities or employment.

The study of the boundaries will need to be completed by Jan. 1 if it is to be used for 2018-19, as dictated by Board policy.

Board chair Julia Brim-Edwards added a three-part amendment that was also passed 7-0. It changed the resolution's wording to reflect that Tubman or an "alternative site" would be used; that instead of a Nov. 15 deadline, the health assessment on Tubman should be completed on an "expedited basis"; and that efforts will be made to keep ACCESS Academy, a Talented And Gifted Education program that is currently housed at Rose City Park, in one building, while leaving open the option of housing the program in adjacent or nearby sites.