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## Clements School Community Center gets \$184K for renovations

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May 25, 2023



The San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday unanimously approved allocating \$184,000 in American Rescue Plan Act funding for improvements and restoration at Clements School Community Center.

WES BOWERS/NEWS-SENTINEL

**CLEMENTS** — The Clements School Community Center will soon undergo a much-needed makeover, thanks to federal pandemic recovery funding.

The San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday unanimously approved allocating \$184,000 in American Rescue Plan Act funding for improvements and restoration at the school.

Jeff Wright, chair of the community center's board of directors, said the COVID-19 pandemic wreaked havoc on not only cities and counties throughout the nation, but nonprofit organizations as well.

The CSCC is a nonprofit organization that has been working to secure the former Lodi Unified School District site, located at 19051 E. Highway 88, for the last 12 years. The organization has been working to convert the school into a community center for the town of about 900 residents.

"All of our requests for funding are for infrastructure, which are non-recurring expenditures and will provide benefits for many years to come to our local community," Wright told supervisors Tuesday.

"COVID funds will allow our community to stabilize from the pandemic and recover temporary operating shortfalls until economic conditions resume and normalize," he added.

According to Tuesday's staff report, \$25,000 of the allocated funding will be used for materials required to remove the existing CSCC parking lot, and replace it with an asphalt parking facility that will be ADA compliant. A local company will donate the labor involved, staff said.

New security fencing fronting Highway 88, along with two 20-foot exit and entry gates, will be installed for \$25,000. The fencing will also have two 4-foot gates for egress and ingress.

Materials to replace and install the security fencing on the perimeter of the property is estimated at \$15,100 of ARPA funding. Labor will again be donated by a local company. Another \$23,000 will be used for new signage at the site, according to staff.

Supervisor Steve Ding initiated the effort to seek ARPA funding from the board, stating the project was "vitally important" for an area on the outskirts of the county.

"Clements is a community that takes care of themselves. They ask for very little," he said. "We talk about dollars, talk about process, but what we really invest in is people. When we have people that step up in our community and take care of themselves, we need to pay attention to that."

The school was founded in 1939, and Lodi Unified took over its operations in 1967. By the time it was shuttered in 2011, there were 80 kindergartners and first-graders enrolled there.

The district said at the time that closing the campus would save about \$93,000, and students were transferred to Lockeford School.

In 2014, the district gave the site back to the community of Clements, and residents there formed the CSCC.

Supervisors on Tuesday said they appreciated that Ding brought the funding request forward, adding the project was long overdue.

"Clements is a smaller community, and it seems sometimes smaller communities are forgotten in favor of bigger cities," board chair Robert Rickman said. "Community centers serve a purpose, just as the name implies. I'm glad to see this going to a vote, and we'll see how this plays out."