

Observatory to dazzle astronomers across the universe

Construction to begin later this summer upon township approval

By Lianna Bass

WALL TOWNSHIP — Wall Township Public Schools Director of Technology Jeffrey Janover presented plans for a new observatory to be built in the township later this summer during Tuesday night’s board of education [BOE] meeting.

Mr. Janover presented schematics, designs and site plan detailing various aspects of the observatory and its value to the school district and township at large.

Mr. Janover’s proposal places the observatory in the northwest corner of the property of Allenwood Elementary School, 3301 Allenwood-Lakewood Road. This area was selected because the location would provide for a clear view of the sky without manmade lights or obstructions from trees or infrastructure.

The facility will consist of a 10 foot by 10 foot building, which, according to Mr. Janover, will comply with all municipal codes. A six-foot fence has been proposed to surround the facility to prevent access by unauthorized persons.

The funds to pay for the facility have been raised by the Wall Foundation for Educational Excellence. Mr. Janover brought the idea for the project to the foundation several years ago.



“The Wall foundation immediately loved the project and I was asked to come in and give them a presentation,” he said. “They thought it was a great idea and they began fundraising for it.”

The total proposed cost for the facility is approximately \$35,000.

“We have all of the quotes for laying the foundation and running the power and network cables. We have the funding from the Wall foundation to a tune of about \$20,000, and that’s ready to be spent and we’re ready to roll on it,” he said.

The foundation will continue to raise the remaining money needed for the facility as project moves forward.



Now that a location has been set, Mr. Janover will be applying for a construction permit from the township.

“I’m anticipating agreement from the township and we shouldn’t have any problems with permits,” he said. “I anticipate groundbreaking within the next few weeks.”

According to Mr. Janover, the Wall Township Public Schools maintenance department will be laying the foundation for the facility. The maintenance department will also be performing all electrical work necessary.

The building will be comprised of an aluminum frame structure which will be covered with a heavy-grade ultraviolet [UV] stabilized polyethylene plastic. The structure itself is being built by PolyDome, a dome manufacturing company based in Litchfield, Minnesota.

The observatory will include three telescopes that will be viewable via online access. Access will be provided to district classes as well as to the general public.

Pending township approval, the observatory will be ready for use by September or October, Mr. Janover said.

Educational benefits

for students, teachers

Mr. Janover, an avid astronomer himself, is thrilled that years of planning are finally coming to fruition.

“This is one of the most exciting projects that I have ever worked on with Wall Township,” he said. “I think that the impact it’s going to have on student achievement is going to be profound. It’s the kind of thing that not too many other school districts have at their disposal, and I think that’s what makes us unique.”

Students will explore and investigate a wide range of cosmological objects and events while gaining hands-on experience in the use and maintenance of astronomical equipment. The observatory is meant to help students develop a broader and deeper understanding of their place in the universe and develop and enhance their self-guided learning skills.

Students will also be able to perform meaningful research while collaborating with experts in the field of astronomy and their peers at other schools. They will be able to present and publish their research through various forums, which Mr. Janover believes could enhance their applications to various universities and educational programs.

“It’s the kind of thing that students just latch on to. It gives students a great opportunity to do original research, and the way you get into better universities is by having done research and having published your findings, even if it’s nothing more than presenting your paper to a competition,” he said.

The observatory is also meant to be a valuable tool for teachers, who will be able to guide their students in the application of the scientific method for research purposes. It will allow educators to reach out and collaborate with other educational institutions and colleagues from across the world.

Updates on the observatory project will be discussed at the next BOE meeting, which will be held on Aug. 26 at 7:30 p.m. in Wall Intermediate School, 2801 Allaire Road.

Reader Comments

[Leave a comment](#) on “Observatory to dazzle astronomers across the universe”

© 2014 Star News Group. All rights reserved. Any copying, redistribution or retransmission of any of the contents of this service without the express written consent of Star News Group is prohibited.

[Privacy Policy](#) | [Visitor Agreement](#)