

Houghton Middle School plans greenhouse, garden

March 23, 2016

By GARRETT NEESE (gneese@mininggazette.com) , The Daily Mining Gazette

HOUGHTON - This spring, Houghton Middle School will be adding a greenhouse and garden.

Middle school science teacher Sarah Geborkoff gave a presentation on the project to the School Board at its meeting Monday night.

It will be a collaboration between a few different sources: middle school and high school Lake Superior Stewardship Initiative teams, AP biology class, the high school Ecology Club, 4-H Club and community.

Geborkoff said the project will enhance the existing science curriculum and align with the coming science standards in Michigan education. In addition to hands-on inquiry, it also fits in with a new focus on using STEM principles to solve environmental problems.

Some of the plants could also find their way onto lunch trays.

"I talked to (district food services director) Shelby Turnquist, who's ecstatic, and said if we add some vegetables to the garden, she'll use whatever we can grow, which is great," she said.

The project has gotten more than \$11,000 so far in funding from sources such as the Lake Superior Stewardship Initiative and Portage Health Foundation.

The complex, including a greenhouse, vegetable garden and pollinator garden, would be in a school courtyard off of Gundlach Drive and Gaffney Road. By being in a high-visibility residential area, and being within range of schools' security cameras, Geborkoff said, security shouldn't be an issue.

"I've talked it up with my students so much that at least my students are very proud and excited of the idea that we might have a facility like this put on the school grounds," Geborkoff said.

Estimated costs of setting up the greenhouse and garden are \$10,194. There will also be ongoing costs for electric, heating and other costs. The greenhouse would be probably be used nine months out of the year, she said.

Geborkoff said she plans on applying for a renewal of LSSI funding in 2018.

"My plan on this project is continuing, if it can keep going," she said.

Board members praised the idea, as well as the financial self-sufficiency.

"Usually when people come in with a \$10,000 budget, they're looking for \$9,500," said Board President Brad Baltensperger.

Discussions about a greenhouse had been going on for about two years, said Superintendent Doreen Klingbeil.

"Unless somebody's really going to take it on and have a passion and have students (involved), it really isn't going to work," she said. "Sarah has that, so I don't have any concerns with what Sarah's interested in doing."

© Copyright 2016 The Daily Mining Gazette. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.



Garrett Neese/Daily Mining Gazette

Houghton Middle School science teacher Sarah Geborkoff speaks about a new greenhouse and garden.