

Wallace County High School “Building a Legacy” Track and Field Project

Work Hard, Dream Big and Leave a Legacy

“All good men and women must take responsibility to create legacies that will take the next generation to a level we can only imagine” Jim Rohn

Throughout the years the Wallace County High School has known its share of successes on both state and local levels, and has been privileged to having outstanding individuals, athletes and coaches as a part of the intricate weave of our schools history. It is a tradition that started early with the communities championship basketball teams and a feature of the school's gymnasium facilities in LIFE magazine in 1958. The article highlights the communities pride and commitment to their youth through the social gathering known best as a home basketball game.

The high school has been blessed with gifted and exceptional talents throughout the years. Our recent history includes Coach Kevin Ayers, one of the winningest 8 man football coaches in Kansas history has a state title in Wallace county. The bright prospects of Aria Pearce, a 13 year old athlete currently competing in college track meets in both sprints and long jump and has been competitive in doing so, is also a part of our schools bright future.

As can be witnessed in many rural settings, our limited local resources and access limit the progression and the ability to maintain facilities that keep current standards. Our previous cinder track is no longer in competition worthy condition and offers hazards that limit its practice use. Athletes are training on the street or travel to surrounding communities to use their facilities. Our football stadium and field have not been updated and are not currently handicap accessible limiting the enjoyment by some of the community's older patrons.

In 2018 as part of a community strategic-doing meeting sponsored by our local Wallace County foundation, a group of individuals recognized the need to improve our local track facility and the first track committee was formed. The committee had consulted with a company and worked to establish changes needed to accomodate for updating the track facility to a newer rubberized facility. The committee also began some fundraising efforts. Individual donations and donations toward the Dean Dinkle memorial fund raised nearly \$17,000 of the initial fund.

Covid in 2019-2020 presented challenges in the progression of the project and in the fall of 2021 the track committee was reinitiated to again begin working on improving our facilities. As part of the reassessment of the project, both the previous vender and a new company, Mammoth Sports Construction, were contacted for their proposals on the project. Both companies offered turf as part of their facility upgrades and options. The committee began

looking into some of what made this project beneficial to both the community and student athletes, and in doing so began to explore the options that included both a track and a turf football field.

As part of our considerations, we looked at what benefits upgrading both facilities at the same time may offer, identifying shared lighting and stadium seating as part of that benefit, as well as the benefits of having turf for practices and training for multiple sports and classroom activities. Greater than the benefit of the turf to our athletes, we quickly recognized that this held a much greater community benefit in a way of water conservation. City records supported that an average of 3.16 Million gallons of water were used to water the football and practice fields in 2020-2021. This is enough water to supply nearly 32 households of water for an entire year as the average household use is less than 100,000 per household in Sharon Springs. This provided yet another benefit to the consideration for adding a football turf to our track project.

With the approval of the Wallace County High School board, the committee was permitted to pursue a much larger project now encompassing both a track and football turf as part of its components. Two companies were consulted for their approach to the project and Mammoth Sports Construction was selected as the company that best suited our needs.

In December 2021, Mammoth Sports Constructed provided us with an opinion of probable costs for the project. Like most construction projects, the costs were greater than expected due to our limited access and availability to items such as asphalt and rock, and due to inflation and post-covid demand for construction materials. The estimated cost for the higher quality, Prestige Vertex field turf project was estimated at \$946,146.03. Included in this cost was all base construction, concrete and surfacing materials, maintenance equipment, new goal posts and the costs of the school logo and names in the endzones. The committee also requested quotes for an 8 lane versus 6 lane rubberized track to allow the school the ability to host larger, regional events that we would not be eligible for if we had a 6 lane track. The cost of an 8 lane track with the highest quality BeynonBSS 200 system is estimated to be \$938,971.42. This cost includes base construction and drainage, asphalt, D-zone on the north end zone and new LJ/TJ pits. The total estimated cost for the track and the turf would be an estimated \$1,885,117.45.

In addition to the field and track, there are additional costs to be considered. Mammoth provided us with estimated costs for bleachers at \$351,494.45 and LED lighting at an estimated cost of \$268,999.50. Including both of these options would bring the total project cost up to \$2,505,611.40.

Currently this project will be entirely grant and donation funded. The school board has elected not to pursue any form of bond or mill increases at this time and has not yet expressed interest in considering a lease purchase agreement with some application of capital outlay towards the project. As a committee, we intend to seek out grants that will not only look at the youth benefit of this project, but that will also potentially help us look at the long term water conservation benefits in considering this type of project. We will also be working with the Wallace County Foundation to take donations to the project, and allow donations to be tax deductible. This

relationship will also benefit the local foundation with the small fee they retain for use of their services and will go towards other future community projects.

Naming rights for the facility are available to any donor willing to donate $\frac{2}{3}$ of the total cost of the project. We have structured an "Honorary deed," fundraising campaign selling each yardline and providing those donors an "honorary deed," to that part of the field. Donors will be recognized as part of our "Founders Field" commemorative display when the project has been completed. Large or corporate donors are also given the opportunity to purchase a 8'X12' sideline space that will house their logo for the life of the turf, which is approximately 10 years. This also serves as a possible fundraising plan for when the track/turf requires renewed surfaces. The original committee had also established donation levels, and those levels will continue to be utilized and honored using bricks in a commemorative form.

We are also working with Mammoth Sports Construction to compile a list of like kind donations to allow community members the opportunity to donate labor, equipment and time as part of their contribution to this project. We are blessed to have a community that is generous with their time and willing to put their hands to work to help accomplish the task at hand.

The completion of this project is dependent upon donation response and grant funding. While optimism would like to have an endpoint to the potential completion of this project, there is not yet a finish line. It is our goal that we work steadily and diligently to accomplish this for the improvement of our community.

Harold Frasier, a former Wallace County High school board member and active member of the community is quoted to have once stated that "each generation has the responsibility to repair and replace," and I believe that this project is part of our generation's call to that responsibility.

"People working together in a strong community with a shared goal and a common purpose can make the impossible possible" Tom Vilsack