

State money of \$1.75 million to establish training hub in Sylacauga

CHRIS NORWOOD, The Daily Home
Jul 27, 2021

The Talladega County Board of Education will be getting \$1.75 million from Gov. Kay Ivey's Public School and College Authority Bond Issue.

County Schools Superintendent Dr. Suzanne Lacey told her board Monday that the money will be used to clean up the old Avondale Mills property in Sylacauga, with the goal of using about 30 acres of that property to establish the East Alabama Rural Innovation and Training Hub.

Once completed, the new workforce development hub would provide "unique opportunities for job training for students in Region 2. It will also host some of our existing career tech programs."

Lacey said she would be meeting with facilities supervisor Kelvin Cunningham and Sylacauga architect Ryan Coleman about the project, and that a special celebration was being planned for Wednesday at 1 p.m. at B.B. Comer Memorial High School.

She added that the remaining Avondale property, or at least seven to 10 acres of it, would eventually be used for a new athletic complex for Comer.

Talladega County Schools is the only K-12 system to benefit from the bond issue, she added.

Altogether, according to a news release from the governor's office issued Friday afternoon, Ivey awarded some \$23.5 million to five entities around the state for "worthy infrastructure projects and upgrades to our educational facilities, which will have a lasting impact on future generations of Alabamians. I am extremely grateful to Alabama's retiring finance director Kelly Butler for his diligence on this project to

ensure we are investing wisely in meaningful education and workforce efforts,” Lacey said.

Lacey said she had gone to Montgomery with Rep. Ben Robbins, SAFE Executive Director Margaret Morton and Coosa Valley Medical Center CEO Glenn Sisk in February to discuss the project, and had been informed of the award last week.

“It isn’t often that you get news of getting that much money,” she said. “We are very excited.”

Board Chairman Mike Turner added, “That is really great news,”

Rep. Steve Hurst added after the governor’s announcement, “This is a great shot in the arm for Talladega County. It will give kids another opportunity to learn a trade, a walk of life that will allow them to support themselves when they grow up. I’ve been a proponent for a long time of expanding summer breaks so kids will have more time to learn trades and job skills. This will allow them to get an early start, to not have to wait until after graduation to start job training, particularly for ones who are not planning to go to college.”