

May 8, 2024

Word Count: 198

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QuickPoint! - PPS Climate Policy Is All Cost, No Benefit

By John A. Charles, Jr.

At its May 7th meeting, the Portland Public Schools Board voted to spend nearly \$1 billion to build new school buildings and sports facilities for Ida B. Wells and Cleveland High Schools, respectively. One reason the price tag is so high is that the Board has decided to prohibit the use of natural gas within the schools, as part of the District's campaign against fossil fuels.

But making the schools all-electric doesn't free the District away from fossil fuels. It simply shifts the gas consumption from the schools to other locations, where PGE will burn gas to generate electricity for those schools. The District's climate policy is purely symbolic.

Moreover, the District is planning to have diesel generators on site to provide backup power for outages. Consultants have looked at other fuels, but none provide the attributes needed to instantly provide electricity.

When this issue came up several months ago regarding the expensive rebuild of Jefferson High School, Board Member Julie Brim-Edwards asked what the cost of going all-electric would be. No one on the consultant team could answer the question.

With three large school projects in the pipeline, the Board should know the cost before construction begins.

John A. Charles, Jr. is President and CEO of Cascade Policy Institute, Oregon's free market public policy research organization.

