



Election Update

Questions & Answers

The Columbia Public Schools Board of Education has called a special election on Tuesday, April 6, to submit a no-tax-rate-increase bond issue proposal to Columbia voters. The proposal requires a four-sevenths, or 57 percent, majority approval.

Dates to Remember

Feb. 23—Absentee Voting Begins

March 10—Voter Registration Deadline

March 31—Last Day to Request an Absentee Ballot

April 5—Last Day to Vote Absentee

April 6—Election Day

Q. What is the amount of the proposed bond issue?

A. \$120 million. This is the second phase of the bond issue plan previously approved by voters in 2007.

Q. Will the bond issue increase the present property tax rate?

A. No. A tax levy increase is not necessary to maintain and improve our facilities and no increase is planned. The bond will only extend the current debt payoff period. The current levy amount will not change should the bond issue not be approved by voters.

Q. How will funds be spent?

A. The bond will address five areas:

- **Building Improvements**—\$10 million will be used for building improvements including roofing, window replacement, tuckpointing and interior renovations such as ceilings, flooring, electrical, plumbing and heating.
- **Construction**— \$97.5 million of the amount will be used for new construction, including
 - \$75 million for a new 1,800-student high school including the necessary technology, furniture and athletic fields. This amount also includes \$18 million remaining from the 2007 approved bond;
 - \$7.5 million for additional gyms/physical education space at Hickman and Rock Bridge high schools; and
 - \$15 million for a new elementary school.
- **Air Conditioning**—\$14.8 million will be used to air-condition the remaining non-air-conditioned schools and replace boilers.
- **Technology**—\$7.5 million will provide funding for computers in classrooms and labs and network infrastructure improvements.
- **Interest and Fees**—\$8.2 million will be used to pay for costs associated with bond funding, including \$1.2 million in bond issuance costs and a contingency fund of \$7 million for interest during construction should assessed valuation remain flat or become negative.

Q. Why is there a need for these items?

A. The Board of Education has adopted the following goals based on a study and evaluation of district facilities:

1. Reduce overcrowding in schools, including reducing the number of trailers
2. Improve the physical and learning environments in all schools and all facilities
3. Reduce the number of student grade-level transitions to K-5, 6-8 and 9-12, including moving ninth graders to the high school buildings
4. Increase the functional life and operational/energy efficiency of district buildings

Q. What is the total construction cost?

A. The total project plan is \$138 million. \$18 million of the first \$60 million approved by voters in 2007 has not yet been spent in anticipation of building a new high school. This bond request is part of the district's long-range facilities plan. Funds will be expended over a five-year period. The \$120 million bond request is the combination of the final two \$60 million funding requests that were originally proposed by the Long-Range Facilities Planning Committee. The change was made in order to allow the district to realize cost savings, improved efficiencies and reduction of risk by completing construction of the new high school in one phase rather than three phases. Additionally, the revised plan will allow for a simpler transition period for students impacted by the reduction of grade-level transitions and addition of new school buildings.

Q. Why now?

A. The current economic environment presents a positive climate for obtaining competitive construction bids. Additionally, the market conditions mean that the interest rates on bond sales remain at historically low levels.

Q. Is there a long-range plan for facilities?

A. Yes. The plan development included a community engagement process to help determine facility and program priorities; an educational adequacy study to evaluate each building's ability to support the current and future programs; and an engineering study that evaluated the physical condition and energy efficiency of our buildings. The results of these studies are available at www.columbia.k12.mo.us. Based on these studies, the planning committee made recommendations to the Board of Education for addressing school facilities in the district. The plan also supports the district's strategic planning goals.

Q. The proposal is for a no-tax-rate-increase bond issue. Can the bond be spent on salaries, benefits and supplies?

A. No. By law, bond issues only provide funds for new construction, renovation of existing facilities, technology and the purchase of furniture and equipment. These funds cannot be used to pay for salaries, benefits or supplies.

Q. Can the district afford to operate the new school buildings?

A. Yes. The district has developed a five-year budget model that includes increasing fund balances to prepare for the opening of the new high school in 2013. Additionally, with the ability to reduce the number of grade-level transitions, current teachers and staff will shift to other buildings accordingly.

Q. Are the proposed bond amounts within accepted limits?

A. Yes. Bonding capacity for a school district is set by state statute. Bonding capacity cannot exceed 15 percent of the assessed value of all state and local non-tax-exempt property in the district. The \$120 million proposed bond is within the school district's capacity without the need to increase the current tax rate.

**Facts about
Columbia Public Schools
Did you know...**

- **Student enrollment has increased by more than 750 students in the last five years; another 1,000 students are projected over the next five years**
- **17,419 students enrolled**
- **164 trailers are in use, housing 23 percent of all students**
- **There are 34 school buildings and 6 support facilities**
- **2.7 million square feet of building space to maintain**
- **1.8 million square feet of roof space to maintain**
- **More than half the buildings are 40 years old or older**
- **Only two of our schools are 10 years old or newer**



Please access the district Web site at www.columbia.k12.mo.us for more information, or contact the district administrative offices at (573) 214-3400.