

APRIL 2023

NO-TAX INCREASE BOND REFERENDUM

On April 4, 2023, voters in the Strafford R-VI School District will be asked to consider a No-Tax Increase Bond Referendum that would provide \$10 Million in funds for renovations, improvements, additions, and safety & security needs of the district.

BALLOT LANGUAGE:

Proposition K.I.D.S.

Shall the Board of Education of the Strafford R-VI School District, Missouri, without an estimated increase in the current debt service property tax levy, borrow money in the amount of Ten Million Dollars (\$10,000,000) for the purpose of providing funds to construct, equip, and furnish classroom additions and complete renovations at the Lucille Cogdill Early Childhood Center; to upgrade safety and security; to acquire property for school purposes; to reconfigure current parking lots for better traffic flow; to the extent funds are available, improve District athletic facilities and complete other repairs and improvements to the existing facilities of the District; and issue general obligation bonds for the payment thereof?

If this proposition is approved, the adjusted debt service levy of the School District is estimated to remain unchanged at \$0.7000 per one hundred dollars of assessed valuation of real and personal property.

BOND ISSUE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (DRAFT)

Q: When is the election?

A: Tuesday, April 4, 2023

Q: What is a bond referendum?

A: A bond is an authorization for a school district to go into debt and to establish a tax rate to pay off the debt over time. The bond only pays for capital projects, such as facilities and equipment, and may not be used for regular operational costs like salaries or supplies.

Q: How is it possible to issue bonds without a tax increase?

A: This is possible thanks to good financial management by the district. Due to refinancing and paying off debt early, \$10 Million in bonding capacity is available to reissue for facility safety and security improvements.

Q: If approved, what needs will these projects address?

A: The primary goal of the projects would be adding an addition to the Lucille Cogdill Early Childhood Center. Any additional funds would be used to upgrade additional projects including safety and security, parking lots, and athletic facilities across the district.

GROWTH

The district has seen an increase of over 100 students in the past two years. With new home construction taking place in Strafford, that number is project to at least double in the next few years. Currently it is anticipated our ECC and elementary will be stretched the most by this expected

growth, so we need to address the ECC building first. SMS and SHS are also experiencing growth, but those buildings currently have enough capacity to meet immediate growth needs.

An addition to the Lucille Cogdill Early Childhood Center would address growth by allowing for an increase in the preK program as well as moving current kindergarten classrooms located in the elementary to the new ECC addition. This movement would result in opening elementary classrooms to absorb the growth in elementary enrollment.

Also on the topic of growth, if the bond issue passes the district would have funds to purchase land to address long range needs. The district values the benefits of the district being on one large campus, being somewhat landlocked, we desire for future land purchases to focus on keeping students on the one campus, while possibly moving the bus barn or Central office off campus if needed to maximize the current school campus.

ACADEMIC NEEDS OF OUR YOUNGEST LEARNERS

An addition to the ECC building allows us to serve additional PreK students. We typically have a waiting list for PreK students wanting to enter our full day program.

We currently serve approximately 65 PreK students. The addition to the ECC would allow us to potentially serve approximately 150 preschool students.

In the words of kindergarten teachers, preschool is the “great equalizer” in helping students be ready to learn and grow as they enter kindergarten. Early childhood education is vital to a child’s development as a student all through elementary school.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

The ECC addition would include some classrooms built to high wind speed specifications.

The addition of these classrooms along with the FEMA Safe Room at the MS and HS as well as the current high wind speeds designed classrooms at the elementary would provide ALL preschool through 12th grade students and employees a high quality shelter in inclement weather.

These high wind speeds designed classrooms would also allow the ECC students to shelter in place and eliminate the need for them to walk across the street to the MS/HS FEMA building in case of an inclement weather event.

Q: Why was the HPER facility constructed rather than adding classrooms to the ECC at that time?

A. The HPER facility was constructed using remaining funds generated from the Bond Issue the community graciously passed in 2019. The district solicited bids for an ECC addition at that time as well. It was determined at that time, the district would not be able to add as much space as might be needed at the ECC with the funds that remained from the 2019 Bond Issue. That decision has proven correct, as the growth the district

has seen since that time, indicates we now have a need for a larger addition than was previously planned.

Q: What is required to pass the bond?

A: A 4/7 majority, or 57.1% plus 1 vote is required to pass a bond issue.

Tax Levy Increase (DRAFT)

Ballot Language:

Proposition 2

Shall the Board of Education of the Strafford R-VI School District, Missouri, be authorized to increase the operating tax levy to \$3.1000 per one hundred dollars of assessed valuation for the purposes of attracting and retaining quality certified, support, and safety faculty and staff, maintaining facilities, and meeting additional operating expenses?

(If this proposition is approved, the adjusted operating tax levy of the District is estimated to increase from \$2.7500, currently, to \$3.1000 per one hundred dollars of assessed valuation and will be applied to the assessed valuation in Tax Year 2023 and each year thereafter.)

Recruiting and Retaining Highly Qualified Faculty & Staff:

This levy will also be used to improve district salary schedules for the purpose of recruiting and retaining highly qualified faculty and staff. Currently Stafford teachers rank below several neighboring schools at beginning level compensation. In addition, the district wants to maintain competitive levels of compensation throughout the salary schedule to encourage current staff to finish their teaching careers in Strafford.

We anticipate teachers will receive anywhere from \$4,225 to \$5,225 per year base raise. Our goal is for support staff to receive a similar type of percentage per hour raise.

The goal is to recruit and retain the highest quality of certified and support staff for Strafford Schools.

TAX LEVY FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (DRAFT)

Q: When is the election?

A: Tuesday, April 4, 2023

Q: What is an operating levy?

A: An operating levy generates money to pay a district's operating costs, such as salaries, technology updates, utilities, etc. The Strafford School District operates at the state minimum operating levy of \$2.75. Out of 516 public school districts in Missouri, 61 have the minimum levy of \$2.75. The state average operating levy is \$3.67.

Q: Why do we need to pass a levy increase now?

A: The simple answer is our kids deserve the BEST! Our goal as a district is to be the Gold Standard for school districts in Southwest Missouri. It's NOT ABOUT utilizing the latest and greatest programs or keeping up with the surrounding districts. It's ABOUT giving our students the best opportunities, demonstrating the community supports them, and providing them a reason to be proud to call Strafford home!

In order to do this, we have to hire and retain the highest quality educators that we can. The number one factor in student success is the quality of the educators in their classroom. To provide the best, we have to hire and retain the best!

Q: How will these funds help us to hire and retain the highest quality educators?

A: These funds will allow us to raise our teacher and support staff salaries considerably, making us competitive with the salaries of surrounding larger and comparably sized districts.

While some districts are going to 4 day school weeks to hope to retain teachers, our district currently values a 5 day school week because we believe it is best for kids for a variety of reasons, including:

- Impact on academics.
- Families being responsible for the cost of child care on the 5th day not in session.
- Difficulties arranging transportation to 5th day activities.
- Access to free and reduced-price breakfasts and lunches on 5th days.
- Impact of longer days on children.

- Impact on students with disabilities who depend on consistency and structure, or on the medical care they receive at school.

Increasing salaries for teachers and staff, helps offset the option for a 4 day school week as a retention tool for teachers.

These funds will also help us to hire additional staff in order to add much needed positions in the areas of school safety (additional School Resource Officer), counseling services, career readiness offerings, interventions, as well as hiring additional teachers to help keep class sizes small and keep up with the student enrollment growth.

Q: How much of the District's budget is used to pay teachers and District staff?

A: Salaries and benefits for all District staff comprise approximately 70 percent of District expenses.

Q: What is required to pass the levy?

A: A simple majority is required to pass a levy.

Q: What will the levy cost me?

A: The impact of increasing the Operating Levy to \$3.10 on a \$100,000 (**assessed value**) home is \$.13 per day, or \$5.94 a month (\$47.50 yearly). Rates will vary for residents, businesses, and agricultural property.

HOME VALUE	ASSESSMENT RATIO	ASSESSED VALUE	YEARLY	MONTHLY	DAILY
\$100,000	19.00%	\$19,000	\$66.50	\$5.54	\$.18
\$150,000	19.00%	\$28,500	\$99.25	\$8.32	\$.27
\$200,000	19.00%	\$38,000	\$133.00	\$11.08	\$.36

Q: How much property tax are residents paying at the current rate?

A: The current adjusted operating levy tax rate for Strafford is \$2.75. This is the lowest rate for the 12 cohort districts in our area, including our Mid-Lakes Conference schools. Strafford is one of 61 schools in the state of Missouri with the minimum \$2.75 rate out of 516 districts in the state.

DISTRICT	OPERATING TAX RATE
NIXA	3.65
LOGAN ROGERSVILLE	3.56
CLEVER	3.54
SPRINGFIELD	3.49
HOLLISTER	3.45
FORSYTH	3.34

OZARK	3.26
MARSHFIELD	3.24
REPUBLIC	3.21
WILLARD	3.03
FAIR GROVE	2.96
SKYLINE	2.88
STRAFFORD	2.75

Q: How does the current salary schedule compare to other area school districts?

A: Strafford Schools have fallen behind some of the neighboring schools in regard to the teacher salary schedule. In addition support staff are also behind the compensation levels of many surrounding districts, making it difficult to recruit and retain quality employees. We are no longer just competing with other districts for the best teachers and employees, we are now competing with other professions, leading to quality people getting out of education altogether.

SCHOOL	BASE SALARY	MASTERS + 10 YEARS	MASTERS + 30 YEARS
NIXA	\$40,100	\$48,790	\$69,691
OZARK	\$40,000	\$48,950	\$66,325
SPRINGFIELD	\$41,544	\$55,566	\$71,603
REPUBLIC	\$40,685	\$50,985	\$60,735
WILLARD	\$40,180	\$49,625	\$64,907

LOGAN ROGERSVILLE	\$38,000	\$47,350	\$63,650
MARSHFIELD (4 DAY)	\$36,500	\$47,220	\$61,560
STRAFFORD	\$36,500	\$46,125	\$60,625

Q: How will the district salary schedule compare to area districts if the levy increase passes?

A. The goal for the district is to raise the teacher salary schedule base to \$40,000 or \$41,000, as well as providing a similar percentage for non-certified staff.

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SPRINGFIELD	\$41,544	\$55,566	\$71,603
REPUBLIC	\$40,685	\$50,985	\$60,735
WILLARD	\$40,180	\$49,625	\$64,907
STRAFFORD	\$40,000	\$49,625	\$64,925
OZARK	\$40,000	\$48,950	\$66,325
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Q: How does the quality of the schools affect property values and the local economy?

A: Realtors agree a good school system attracts buyers to an area. Many home buyers ask about the school district before making a decision. In addition, companies that are considering locations for new businesses insist on a good educational system for their children and their employee' children. Knowing the Strafford School District has excellent faculty & staff as well as

safe and modern facilities could be the deciding factor for many families and businesses to come to the community, which would lead to higher property values for homeowners.

Q: As a staff member at Strafford Schools am I allowed to campaign for the Bond or Levy Issues?

A: Communication for Strafford School employees is very important.

Policy prohibits the school district and its employees, including entities that represent the school district, from using district resources or time to campaign for a school bond or levy measure.

Here are some guidelines to help!

Policy GBCB

14. State law prohibits teachers from participating in the management of a campaign for the election or defeat of a member of the Board of Education that employs such teacher.

15. Unless otherwise allowed by law, employees may not engage in political campaigning during the working day or during times when they are performing their official duties.

16. Employees will not represent their personal opinions as the opinions of the district and, to avoid confusion, are required to clearly indicate when they are speaking or writing as an individual and not a representative of the district.

Never: Campaign for the ballot measure online or in person during working hours -Campaign for the ballot measure from a school-issued device -Campaign for the ballot measure as an entity that represents Strafford Schools, such as a team or extra-curricular group

Always: Share factual information about the ballot measure any time, any place, any way (If communication comes from Strafford Schools directly, you're good!) -Be kind to everyone regardless of comments made about the measures.