

March 28, 2019

Hopkins Public Schools Community:

The Board of Education recently hosted two community forums in order to gather input regarding district facilities needs. Thank you to those who attended and shared your thoughts. We also sought input from the district's financial consultant, architectural firm and construction management firm.

Prior to the forums, a facilities needs assessment was conducted to give the district an indication of the condition of its current facilities. That report identified that more than \$16 million would be required to bring district facilities (including items such as mechanical units, classroom wings, roofs, athletic fields, asphalt paving and more) to "like new" condition. This did not include building new facilities. Not all of these items need to be addressed immediately, but most will need attention within 5-10 years. The district's sinking fund will be used to address some of these projects.

The Board's building and grounds committee met several times over the past six months to review the findings of this report and to also consider some of the facilities improvements suggested last year during the strategic planning process. This has been a challenging endeavor.

During the first community forum in February, staff and community members made a wide variety of suggestions for improving district facilities. These included an auditorium with a fine arts wing, improvements to the soccer facility (field, lights and bleachers), a new middle school classroom wing, an area to develop skilled trades, additional storage areas, additional locker rooms, a wrestling area and more. It was estimated by our construction manager that the cost of these items could be up to \$35 million. This would require asking taxpayers for over a 2-mill increase. Hopkins Public Schools currently has the highest millage rate in the area and one of the highest in the state.

The district's financial consultant analyzed our current bond debt and taxable value projections and determined a specific "window of opportunity" for a millage election. In 8-9 years (depending on the increase in our tax base), the district could actually lower our current debt millage from 10.34 mills to 7 mills while creating nearly \$55 million in bonding capacity. The Board endorses this solution.

Taking into consideration all of this information, the Board has decided to step back and slow down this process in order to ensure sound decisions are made. We will not be seeking a millage election in November 2019, and we are postponing the remaining community forums scheduled on April 22 until a later date.

The Board is committed to keeping our school district sound financially and also providing the resources needed to improve our educational offerings.

In the meantime, the Board will set up small group meetings with various staff members to discuss ways we can make improvements that benefit our students, yet stay within the financial limitations we face.

Hopkins Board of Education