



February 28, 2006 Bond Referendum

# More Answers to Your Referendum Questions

These are answers to recent questions by school district residents. Still have a question? Leave yours on the Phone Hotline: 763-795-5195 or Email Hotline: 2006BondReferendum@district16.org

**Q:** *How would a new stadium, new businesses, or new housing affect the school district?*

**A:** New businesses and new homes do *not* bring new dollars to the district. (Only additional students bring new dollars.) New development in the district could, however, have the desired effect of lowering the cost of a bond or levy for each individual property owner.

Each year, taxable properties in the district split a fixed amount of funding for schools. With each new house and each new business, there are more properties to assume the fixed annual cost of the bond.

In the last five years, the taxable market value of properties within school district boundaries has doubled. During this time, Blaine has continued to be the fastest-growing city, with the most new housing, in the metro area.

Such growth could annually decrease the cost of a referendum to individual property owners.

**Q:** *If this passes, will you be coming back to us with another new referendum in the near future?*

**A:** No, we will not. We fully expect that current "per pupil" state funding and increased enrollment will cover any additional costs related to new construction in the bond referendum.

If the bond referendum passes, we do not anticipate another new operating levy referendum in the foreseeable future. It is important to note, however, that our present operating levy would need to be renewed by 2010. (This would be a renewal and not a request for new funding.)

While we can't control what the Legislature does with school funding, if all major variables remain stable, we anticipate no reason to seek additional funding for years to come.

**Q:** *What if the February 28 referendum doesn't pass?*

**A:** Yes, we would conduct another election, and probably soon.

Deferred maintenance and renovation needs won't go away. They will, however, become more expensive to complete. Interest rates and construction costs will increase.

The extensive enrollment growth will continue to occur, creating school crowding that could negatively impact student achievement.

It is the school district's responsibility to address the needs of students and their facilities.

Would it be the exact same long-range plan in the referendum? Probably not. But, if the facilities plan is scaled back, a number of the crucial needs would probably remain undone, and without solutions for the foreseeable future.

As a task force member said: "Now is the time to do it all, to do it right, and to get the biggest bang for our buck."

**Q:** *If the bond is successful, where would students in the Kenneth Hall Elementary attendance area go to school?*

**A:** Because the opening of the new elementary school would be over two years away and because population and demographics continue to change, final determinations must wait.

We *can* project that, in most cases, students living in the City of Spring Lake Park and in the current Kenneth Hall Elementary attendance area would attend either Park Terrace or Woodcrest Elementary.

Both would be newly renovated by fall 2008.

**Q:** *How was the site chosen for the new K-3 elementary school?*

**A:** Our school district serves students and families in Blaine, Spring Lake Park, and Fridley, yet none of our existing schools is located north of Highway 610.

The new elementary school would be located near the intersection of Highway 242 and Cloud Drive. Adjacent to a planned city park, it is the only property that fit the size requirements and district criteria.

With 60 percent of our current students living in Blaine, with over 800 new students and 2,000 new housing units in Blaine, we are building a school where current and future growth is taking place.

**Q: Who will go to the new K-3 elementary school?**

**A:** Students living north of the Anoka County airport could expect to attend the new K-3 elementary school.

At this time, however, it is still undetermined which school students living south or west of the airport in Blaine will attend.

Equity and balance considerations for the student body of each school would be a part of the decision-making. This is a District priority as well as a necessity for compliance with State and Federal law.

**Q: How will you keep us informed if the referendum passes?**

**A:** If the referendum is a success, we will communicate with you as much or more after the referendum passes, as we have before it passes.

If the referendum passes, mail and website updates will be provided to district residents throughout all planning and construction phases.

**Q: How will we know that our tax dollars will be spent wisely?**

**A:** We are fully committed to completing all projects, on time, and in a cost-effective manner. We will do this with *your* help. A Citizen Construction Oversight Group will be formed and any resident may elect to participate.

Meetings will be held to review design and construction progress, hear from the architect and construction manager, and provide feedback.

Call 763-785-5513 if you would like to be involved.

**Q: How soon would construction begin? Will this affect students?**

**A:** If the referendum passes, architects and engineers will spend 6-9 months on designs and plans. Bids would be let by February 2007. Work on Woodcrest, Park Terrace, and the new elementary school will be completed by fall 2008. Construction at the Westwood complex and High School complex would be completed by fall 2009 or winter 2010.

The safety and well-being of students and staff is paramount, so much of the construction will occur during the summer months. If it becomes necessary to do some construction while classes are in session, every precaution will be taken to separate the students and staff from the construction.

Parents and all community members will be continually informed through a planned series of construction updates.

**Q: Is it true that the new elementary school will also have a community center?**

**A:** No, it will not. A few people have asked this question, probably because we indicated that the new school "would be used by the community during evening and weekend hours."

This would be no different than all of our other schools. Because schools belong to the community, each is available for community use, as much as possible, when school is not in session.

Gyms, cafeterias, and classrooms can be and are used at night and on weekends for Girl or Boy Scout meetings, youth athletic leagues, dance recitals, political caucuses, spaghetti dinners, pancake breakfasts, and the like.

**Q: When, where, and how do I vote on the bond referendum?**

**A:** The special election for the bond referendum is Tuesday, February 28, 2006. Election hours are 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Maps to polling places are at [www.springlakeparkschools.org](http://www.springlakeparkschools.org).

School district residents living in Blaine vote at Westwood Elementary School, 701-91st Ave NE, Blaine.

*From Highway 65/Central Ave., go west on 89th Ave. Turn right on Jackson St. Proceed to 91st Ave. NE and turn left. Go one block, turn right on "Westwood School Road."*

School district residents living in Spring Lake Park or Fridley vote at Woodcrest Elementary School, 880 Osborne Rd, Fridley.

*Take Highway 65/Central Ave. to Osborne Rd. Go west two blocks. Turn left on Van Buren St. to enter the parking lot.*

**Q: What if I still have a question?**

**A:** We welcome your questions. We want everyone to be informed, to have all of the information necessary to make an informed decision.

Superintendent Don Helmstetter reviews every question that is received and personally responds to most. We will respond to any individual, to any question, night or day, weekday or weekend. Leave a voice mail on the Phone Hotline, 763-795-5195, or E-mail Hotline, [2006BondReferendum@district16.org](mailto:2006BondReferendum@district16.org), and you will get a response the same day or next day.

The district's web site ([www.springlakeparkschools.org](http://www.springlakeparkschools.org)) has over one year of information on the facilities process, task force recommendations, and bond projects. This includes four online videos in addition to the many documents, reports, and updates.