

December 7, 2005

Spring Lake Park School Board sets date for bond referendum election in 2006

February 28 bond election will address district enrollment growth, aging facilities, deferred maintenance and new construction

The Spring Lake Park School District 16 school board unanimously authorized a \$95 million bond referendum election for Tuesday, February 28, 2006 at a special board meeting last night.

"The school board's action demonstrates their resolve to repair and renovate aging facilities and to build new facilities to address our rapidly growing enrollment," said Superintendent Don Helmstetter.

The school district, which serves students from Blaine, Spring Lake Park, and Fridley, must accommodate a nearly 20 percent increase in school enrollment over the next six years. In just one year alone, from fall 2004 to 2005, 200 new students enrolled in the district. Over 800 new students are projected.

A task force of community members and district staff started work on a study of school district needs and facilities last February. It presented a report to the school board on November 8, identifying over \$93 million in needs for upgrading and renovating 35 to 50 year-old facilities, completing deferred maintenance projects, addressing land-locked and under-sized school sites, completing new construction projects, and building a new K-3 elementary school in Blaine where population growth is the fastest in the district.

Like the School Board, task force members were unanimous, as well, in their decision to do whatever is necessary to improve District 16's facilities for this and the next generation of students.

At one of the community information meetings held in the fall, task force member Dick Morin, a Fridley resident and parent of Spring Lake Park High School graduates, had this to say: "We need to step up to the challenge and do what is necessary to carry our schools into an ever-challenging future. These are our schools, our children, our responsibility."

The Board unanimously endorsed the task force plan that was presented at community information meetings in the fall and is available on the district web site www.springlakeparkschools.org. They also approved additional construction at Woodcrest Elementary School, a concept that was previously discussed, but not a viable option at the time of the task force study. The plan now includes adding early childhood programs to the Woodcrest site in a new wing that will connect the two existing wings at the south end of the building.

If approved on February 28, 2006, the referendum would mean a net tax increase of about \$16/month for the average district homeowner.

For a history of the facilities study and future updates on the bond referendum, continue to visit the district web site. There are sections available to have your questions answered, to schedule a "coffee party" information session, or to sign up for facilities tours which will be scheduled after the first of the year. Upcoming district mailings will provide full details of the facilities improvement plan and voting information. A total of 6-10 community information meetings will be scheduled in January.