

Fern Ridge School District Bond Levy

Measure 20-220

FAQ (11 Feb 2014)

1. Is this ballot measure for a bond?

- Yes. Following a yearlong committee and community input process, the Fern Ridge School Board approved a bond measure that will be on the ballot in May.

2. How much would this cost me?

- The District's goal is to not increase taxes. Because the District's current bonds will be expiring soon, the tax rate property owners currently pay will not be increasing.

3. Who came up with the list of bond projects?

- The District formed a community based Long Range Facility Planning Committee in February 2013 to assess the District's facility needs and to develop a plan to ensure that future decisions are based upon community input and consensus.
- The Committee assessed the District's existing facilities, examined enrollment projections, reviewed different educational models, and gathered input from the community.

4. It looks like there are some repairs listed. Doesn't the District take care of their buildings?

- The buildings have been maintained well, but current needs far exceed the support the District's operating budget can provide. Deferring critical capital repairs would only result in greater costs in the future.

5. Does this plan address any potential growth?

- Yes. Both elementary schools are at capacity and a primary element of this plan is addressing that issue. The middle school and high school have capacity to grow.

6. Are the elementary schools really over-crowded?

- Yes. Veneta Elementary is currently over-crowded and uses 2 portable classrooms. The state mandated requirement of full-day kindergarten in 2015 will bring Elmira Elementary beyond capacity and further impact Veneta Elementary. The bond would add classrooms at both sites to address current and projected needs.

7. Why not re-open Noti or Central Elementary?

- Re-opening a smaller sized elementary school would not be cost effective. For example, there are only 40 students in grades K-5 that currently live within the Noti boundary.
- The Noti property is currently for sale, and part of Central is being leased to a local theater group.

8. Why not go to one elementary school?

- That idea was examined by the Long Range Facility Planning Committee. Elementary schools can lose the connectivity with students and the community when they become large. With anticipated growth, we could easily get to 800 students in one facility. By investing in both facilities, we would have room to grow and could accommodate 400-450 students at each site.

9. Why not just repair Elmira Elementary—why replace it?

- Elmira Elementary is 65 years old. To address all the needs there, it would cost about 72% of the cost of building a new school and would only extend the life of the school for another 20-25 years. A new school would last 75-80 years and could address many more modern educational needs.

10. Will this plan buy more teachers?

- No. Bonds can only be used for the projects listed on the ballot. Bond funds cannot pay for salaries or operational costs.

11. If you are creating more space, and bond funds can't be used on salaries, how are you going to staff the new space?

- The classrooms being built are either replacements or are preparing us for state mandated full-day kindergarten and projected growth.

12. Is technology a part of the plan?

- Yes, \$1.4 million of the plan is directly focused on technology. We want to increase the student to computer ratio, create greater access for students, and strengthen our technology infrastructure to address current and future needs for connectivity through hard-wire and wireless resources.

13. What are the seismic concerns?

- A seismic assessment was performed and identified some needs. Some of those needs are being addressed now, but all of them could be addressed with an approved bond.

14. Why the new gym at the High School?

- The new gym will accommodate State mandated P.E. requirements in addition to fulfilling the need for more athletic space and increased community needs and requests to use the District's facilities.
- Having only one gym at the high school for athletics necessitates the use of the middle school gym on game nights, which in turn, forces out our youth groups and teams from that space.
- Additional gym space would also allow high school athletes to get home earlier during the week as practices run late with one gender going after school and the other following them.

15. What would be the potential ways the community could use the new facilities?

- The new gym is a space that could be easily accessed by the community, built in a way that allows for easy access without compromising the security of the entire building.
- The new commons area and kitchen at Veneta Elementary would be a similar space, built on the front (SW side) of the school for easy access to community groups after school and in the summer.

16. Couldn't we do less right now?

- The Long Range Planning Committee assessed needs totaling \$67 million. The bond projects total \$26.7 million and would implement only the highest, most critical priorities.

17. What happens if we do not fund this plan?

- The District Facilities Committee is currently reviewing needs in several areas – safety and security, capital needs, technology, and growth – to determine the highest priorities in each area that could be funded by the District's operational budget. All other needs would have to be deferred.
- For example, in an area like "growth," options such as reconfiguring grade levels and or purchasing portable classrooms will have to be considered.

18. How is this bond measure different from the past?

- The District took more time in planning and involved more people. The Long Range Facilities Planning Committee started their work in early 2013 to create a plan that will guide future decision making based on community input and support.
- More emphasis was put on protecting the investment in our existing facilities and making strategic additions to protect the investment in our students.
- The percentage of dollars being spent on new athletic spaces has decreased significantly.