

NEWS

D86 board to ask voters for \$166 million

Members unanimously agree to put referendum to improve facilities on the Nov. 6 ballot

By Pamela Lannom

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It's official.

The Hinsdale High School District 86 Board voted unanimously Monday to place a \$166 million building referendum on the Nov. 6 ballot.

About \$101 million is earmarked for projects at Hinsdale Central, with almost \$65 million to be spent at Hinsdale South. Some \$45 million is dedicated to safety, security, accessibility and infrastructure at both high schools.

"It's a big number — no question about it," board member and facilities committee Chairman Jennifer Planson said, noting that the board has been discussing much-needed work since January 2015. "The projects have been vetted several times. As one community member said, now is the time. It has been 50 years since a referendum has passed in this district. It is time to pass this referendum.

"It will touch every aspect of each school," she added. "Every student will feel the impact of this referendum."

Voters rejected a \$76 million referendum in the April 2017 election. At that time, voters elected four new board members, who have been working on a new proposal since last fall. Community members were surveyed, a new facilities task force was formed and the board approved a new strategic plan for the district.

Board member Nancy Pollack noted the amount does not include almost \$18 million in projects that were identified.

"The \$166 (million) isn't everything that was on the list, nor was it everything that was recommended," she said. "There definitely are some things that still aren't being done."

Board member Robin Gonzalez said there has been some hesitancy to champion great facilities, but school buildings that are more reflective of their academic reputation benefit students and taxpayers.

"We have the highest quality of academics. We know that. The data tells us that. But we also have schools that are beyond aging — they are in great disrepair," she said.



Architects' renderings show what the new fine arts entrance would look like at Hinsdale Central High School if voters approve a \$166 million referendum Nov. 6. Proceeds would cover the cost of many projects at both high schools, including improved STEM classrooms. (artwork provided by District 86)

If the referendum passes, the owner of a \$1 million home will pay an additional \$709 a year in property taxes (on a \$4,707 tax bill) if the board issues the bonds all at once and pays them back over 20 years. The same homeowner will see a \$613 increase if the board staggers the bond issues over three to five years and pays them back over 23 to 25 years.

"That helps to spread the burden over more residents who will enjoy those benefits as they move in and out of the district," said Bob Lewis of PMA Securities, the district's municipal bond advisor.

The total cost of the referendum, with interest, is estimated at \$242 million.

Before the 6-0 vote (member Kevin Camden was absent), two parents encouraged the board to put the question to district residents.

Central PTO President Sarah Magnuson of Hinsdale, a member of the community task force that recommended the referendum proposal, noted that the district hadn't passed a referendum in more than half a century.

"Our facilities need to be brought up to meet the excellent standards set by our students, teachers and staff," she said.

Annie Kiperman of Clarendon Hills, who also served on the task force, agreed.

"Our schools are crumbling. They are embarrassing," she said.

The board's unanimous vote to put the question on the ballot was followed by a smattering of applause and cheering from audience members. "We're all very happy with the referendum we're putting before taxpayers," board President Bill Carpenter said.

Referendum projects

The \$166 million referendum would pay for a variety of projects at Hinsdale Central and Hinsdale South high schools. For a detailed list and more information on the referendum, visit d86.hinsdale86.org > November 2018 referendum.

Security & safety

Central — \$3 million
South — \$2.7 million
Total — \$5.7 million

Accessibility

Central — \$2.7 million
South — \$2.7 million
Total — \$5.4 million

STEM focus

Central — \$2.1 million
South — \$6.6 million
Total — \$8.7 million

Infrastructure

Central — \$20 million
South — \$14.4 million
Total — \$34.4 million

Special ed/student services

Central — \$15.3 million
South — \$8.9 million
Total — \$24.2 million

Cafeteria

Central — \$4.5 million
South — \$3.4 million
Total — \$7.9 million

Library

Central — \$1.7 million
South — \$4.5 million
Total — \$6.2 million

Renovate classrooms

Central — \$2.6 million
South — \$1.6 million
Total — \$4.1 million

Pool

Central — \$24 million
South — \$15 million
Total — \$39 million

Space conversion

Central — \$11.2 million
Total — \$11.2 million

Fine & performing arts

Central — \$14.4 million
South — \$5.1 million
Total — \$19.5 million

Grand total

Central — \$101.5 million
South — \$64.7 million
Total — \$166.4 million