

NEWS

D86, residents working to get word out

Volunteers to supplement district efforts to educate voters about November referendum

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Although the November election is still two months away, work is well under way to educate voters about the \$166 million building referendum Hinsdale Township High School District 86 has placed on the ballot.

The education campaign is “100 percent more aggressive” than it was before a \$76 million referendum failed in April 2017, according to Karen Warner, the district’s chief communications officer.

“Last time the board did not decide the final project list until Feb. 22 and early voting began Feb. 23 and Election Day was April 4,” she said. “We did have fliers and we did hold tours, but in terms of actually being able to mail things out, we

a much more difficult concept to grasp.”

Warner also has created a tab on the district’s web page at d86.hinsdale86.org dedicated to referendum information, including an overview, list of projects, tax rate information, the legal wording of the question and frequently asked questions.

“We keep adding to that as we get new questions,” Warner said.

Residents also can view photos of the current spaces and see renderings of what they would look like if improved. Parents who attended a tour offered on curriculum night last week enjoyed seeing those renderings, Warner said.

“I think it really helped people visualize what the spaces could look like, especially when you’re standing in those spaces looking around the room,” she said.



Rendering shows residents of Hinsdale High School District 86 what a renovated pool at Central might look like if voters approve a \$166 million building referendum Nov. 6 ballot. (art from District 86)

really didn’t have any time to do that.

“This time around we have more time, and we’re able to use more methods because we have more time.”

The district expects to spend about \$95,000, with money dedicated to social media, video production and online advertising; direct mail pieces; newspaper advertising; handouts and fact sheets; and miscellaneous supplies.

The district also will offer more tours (see sidebar) than it did last year. Seeing the current condition of the facilities can be eye-opening for those who are not familiar with the two schools.

“I think it’s pretty obvious to current parents because they are in the buildings and they see,” Warner said. “If you are beyond that or not here yet or don’t have children, it’s

State law prevents the district from spending money to encourage residents to vote yes, but the district is allowed to disseminate factual information, such as details about district finances and the reasons the board is seeking a referendum. While state law allows board members to campaign for or against the referendum on their own time, district employees are not allowed to do so while they are on the clock.

“I think sometimes people don’t understand why we can’t say as employees that we’re for it,” Warner said. “I think people get upset with that sometimes, but we’re not allowed to. We can bring you to the area and show you the need, but we can’t say, ‘Yes, you should vote for this’ or ‘No, you shouldn’t vote for this.’”

The organization that can encour-

age residents to support the referendum is the Vote Yes for 86 committee, a group of parents and friends of the district who are trying to raise awareness about the condition of the two schools.

Annie Kiperman is one of the four organizers of the group, along with Polly Ascher, Dave Chiappe and Lisa Lundgren. The mom of a freshman and a senior at Central, she knows her children are too old to see most of the benefits if the referendum passes.

“I still want a state-of-the-art school,” the Hinsdale resident said. “I assumed I would have that. I moved from Florida for my kids to go to Central.”

The school offers a great education and wonderful opportunities for students but the building — like Hinsdale South — is suffering from severe neglect, she said. She hopes people realize what will happen if voters do not approve a bond issue to fund the needed work.

“The alternative of not passing the referendum is not the status quo. It’s major cuts,” she said.

Previous board members with “strange ideas or personal desires to rewrite the tax code” have put the district in a “dangerously underfunded” position, she said.

“I think when people give us 30 seconds to talk and hear what’s going on, they’re flabbergasted,” Kiperman said.

The committee is working to get the word out to district residents using every possible venue. Those who can’t attend the school tours can watch virtual tours on YouTube, just one of the forms of social media the group is employing. Volunteers also will be available at a variety of events, including home football games, to talk about the referendum. T-shirts, yard signs and after-hours events also will be utilized.

The committee collected \$12,000 in just a week and has volunteers from all the feeder schools across the district. She encouraged anyone who is interested in getting involved to visit the group’s website at yesfor86.org.

She said she’s enjoying working with an inspiring group of fellow district residents on an important cause, she said. “I want to do this for our kids,” she said.



School tours

Hinsdale High School District 86 is offering guided tours of Hinsdale Central and Hinsdale South high schools so residents can see firsthand the project areas that are part of the \$166 million building referendum that will be on the Tuesday, Nov. 6, ballot.

The total includes \$101.5 million for work at Hinsdale Central and \$64.7 million for work at Hinsdale South.

Tours will be offered on the following schedule:

Central

- 6 p.m. Friday, Sept. 7 — prior to the home football game
- 6 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 13 — prior to the fall show (free pass for tour attendees)
- 10:30 a.m. Saturday, Sept. 22 — prior to the homecoming football game
- 6 p.m. Friday, Oct. 12 — prior to the freshman play
- 6 p.m. Friday, Oct. 19 — prior to the Central-South football game

South

- 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 11 — prior to the foundation and #WAHS meetings
- 6 p.m. Friday, Sept. 28 — prior to the homecoming football game (free pass for tour attendees)
- 4:30 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 17 — prior to D86 Volley for the Cure
- 6 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 1 — prior to the fall musical

This and other election stories will be posted online at thehinsdalean.com