

D86 referendum shaped by many factors

Revised proposal for \$166 million reflects more input from the community and experts

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In the spring of 2017, school board candidate Nancy Pollak was not a supporter of the \$76 million Hinsdale High School District 86 referendum on the April 4 ballot.

Today, board member Pollak has very different views about the \$166 million referendum voters will face Tuesday, Nov. 6.

"It just wasn't put together in a very meaningful way, nor did it offer community members the option to vote on the things they wanted to see in the schools," Pollak said of the 2017 ballot question.

What has changed over the past 20 months?

A pool task force has researched options. A community task force — including representatives from feeder districts — has met and researched options. A life-study and strategic plan were completed. An owner's rep was hired. Residents were surveyed online and over the phone.

"Everybody got to weigh in on it," Pollak said.

And board members kept their own preferences for projects out of the decision-making process, she said. Board member Jennifer Planson, chair of the facilities committee, agreed.

"I did not come up with this list," she said. "It was created from the community task force. They came up with the



This rendering shows what a new band space at Hinsdale Central might look like. (art provided)

list of projects and said, 'Let's send it out to the community to see what they support.'

"It came out at this much higher number, but the projects on this referendum will touch every aspect of the schools," she added. "The previous referendum I don't think touched every single student like this one will."

While the community task force was meeting, the board was working to create and adopt a new strategic plan. The plan highlights the gap between the facilities as they are now and as they would need to be to support its vision.

"We are really wanting to empower students to take charge of their own learning, to take charge of their future, to be able to chart a course they set out based on their aspirations," Superintendent Bruce Law said. "We have a vision of instruction, a vision of

students taking charge of their own learning, and our facilities are not allowing us to do that."

District facilities are an integral part of providing a high-quality education, Planson said.

"We believe that the buildings support the excellence in education that this district is all about," she said. "You can't have them crumbling down around you."

About \$101 million of the total will be spent at Hinsdale Central, with about \$65 million earmarked for South. Safety, security, accessibility and infrastructure projects at both high schools total \$45 million.

The referendum does provide funds for some added space at Central (two science labs and four classroom), but not as much as the 2017 proposal did. The board voted 6-0 Monday to draw a boundary line between the two schools

that will shift more students to South (see story on Page 3).

But the elimination of the buffer zone and the approval of the new boundary line does not negate the need for a referendum, Law said.

"I don't think it's connected at all because both schools have facilities needs," he said. "Whatever school they are assigned, it would be better for that school to be renovated and improved and more accessible."

The referendum is expected to add \$600 a year in taxes for the owner of a \$1 million



home. If that homeowner sells in 10 years, Pollak said she's confident there will be at least a \$6,000 increase in the sale price.

"I can't upgrade anything better," she said. "My return is going to be better if I invest in my school and I share it with my neighbors."

D86 facilities timeline

District 86 board members and others have been talking about facility needs at Hinsdale Central and Hinsdale South high schools in earnest for several years. Here are a few of the highlights of that conversation:

2014

- **Dec. 1** — board votes 4-1 to spend up to \$85,000 to "refresh" the 2011 master facilities plan

2015

- **Sept. 14** — the master facility plan steering committee presents a plan encompassing roughly 94 projects at a cost of about \$200 million

2016

- **Jan. 21** — board votes 4-2 to approve a modified \$130 million master facilities plan, which earmarks roughly \$93 million for Central and \$37 million for South
- **April 18** — board votes 5-2 to identify \$94 million worth of projects as critical

- **July 11** — a citizens task force presents a \$92 million facilities improvement plan to the board
- **July 25** — board discusses a revised plan that totals \$79.9 million
- **Aug. 15** — board votes 4-3 against putting a \$79.9 million referendum on the Nov. 8 ballot
- **Sept. 22** — board discusses options to deal

with growing enrollment at Central in light of decision not to go to referendum

- **Dec. 12** — board members review \$40 million, \$50 million and \$60-\$65 million options for an April 4 referendum

2017

- **Jan. 9** — board votes 6-1 to put a \$76 million referendum on the April 4 ballot

- **April 4** — voters reject the referendum 9,107-3,171

2018

- **Jan. 18** — strategic planning committee convenes

- **Feb. 21** — new facilities community task force convenes

- **March 21** — task force approves list of projects totaling \$184 million to recommend to board
- **April 9** — task force reports to the board
- **May 21** — board votes 6-0 to approve strategic plan

- **June 18** — board votes 5-2 to eliminate buffer zone

- **Aug. 9** — board votes 6-0 to put \$166 million referendum on the Nov. 6 ballot

- **Sept. 17** — board votes to draw boundary line that places 626 houses of the former buffer zone in the Central attendance area and 2,244 houses in the South attendance area

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