

# D86 OKs \$130 million April referendum

Board also makes “difficult” cuts to sports, activities, staffing in the event measure fails

By Ken Knutson

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Hinsdale High School District 86 will again ask voters to fund major upgrades at its two aging schools but with a smaller price tag than the proposal rejected in the Nov. 6 referendum.

By a vote of 6-1 Monday night, board members approved a \$130 million bond sale referendum for April 2 ballot. The amount was scaled back from the \$166 million requested in last month’s referendum in an effort to win over some of the 54 percent of the electorate who voted against it.

Board member Jennifer Planson put forth the new plan to reduce the cost by refurbishing Hinsdale Central’s existing six-lane pool instead of constructing a new 10-lane facility. She noted that the modification would also close the disparity in spending between Central and Hinsdale South that opponents of the previous ballot question had cited.

“It is a split of \$74 million and change at Central, and \$54 million and change at South,” Planson said.

Dissenting board member Keith Chval, however, argued that a new, bigger Central pool should be preserved. Nearly \$14 million could then be saved by not converting the old pool to gymnastics and wrestling space to make way for new classroom space.

“This is barely keeping us up to date

with what comparable districts have done,” he said, stressing his point that this is likely the district’s one chance to make this upgrade. “It’s equitable and it’s what ought to happen. If you don’t put this in place now ... we’re done.”

Board member Nancy Pollak said the board has to be responsive to voters, who indicated that a 10-lane pool at Central was too costly a proposition.

“I do not see how we can put anything other than Option 1 (six-lane pool at Central) on this referendum and expect a different outcome,” Pollak said.

The discussion came right after the board voted 6-1 to make \$3.6 million in budget cuts for next year — including the football, boys and girls swimming and marching band programs at both schools — to pay for a projected \$42 million in needed life safety, security and accessibility projects over the next six years. The board opted to cut more than the \$2.1 million estimated to cover next year’s projects to ensure they have plenty of financial cushion (see chart for full listing of co-curricular program cuts).

The district also expects to save about \$1.6 million by raising the class size to 25 students, \$817,000 by trimming administrative and education support staff and \$337,000 in transportation, among other cuts.

Board member Bo Blackburn said eliminating football makes the most economic sense.

“I think football has to be touched. It’s where the largest savings is available in regard to sports. It’s where we’re able to make the most impact and keep it to one sport,” he said.

Board member Kevin Camden agreed, saying that, if cut, football’s gender specific nature would not run afoul of Title IX gender equity rules.

“You have to look at that because it’s solely a male sport, and you’ve got 280 athletes there, and you have no offset for female student athletes,” he said.

Board President Bill Carpenter at one point asked audience members not to murmur comments during board discussion.

“These are difficult enough decisions for us to have to make up here,” he said.

Board member Kathleen Hirsman was the lone dissenter, expressing disappointment that the cuts were made deeply in certain areas rather taking a more broad-based approach.

“I do concur with the need for the amount of the cuts, but I would like to see those cuts distributed differently,” Hirsman said,

Carpenter said he could not find a way to distribute them more evenly but alluded to the board members’ optimism that a successful referendum in April would eliminate the need for the cuts to be implemented.

“(I) hope that our financial position at some point in time changes that we’re able to add all of these sports back,” he said.

## On the chopping block

Here are the Hinsdale Central athletic programs and activities the Hinsdale High School District 86 Board voted to eliminate from the 2019-20 budget Monday as part of the \$3.6 million in cuts. Corresponding Hinsdale South totals are in listed in parentheses.

Sport	Cost
Football.....	\$129,705
Wrestling.....	\$62,692
Girls swimming .....	\$41,368
Boys swimming .....	\$37,254
Girls water polo .....	\$23,053
Boys water polo .....	\$20,617
Cheerleading.....	\$9,634
Poms .....	\$4,978
Bass fishing.....	\$1,939
Total .....	\$331,240 (\$394,786)

Activity	Cost
Marching band .....	\$26,190
Freshman play .....	\$14,654
September show.....	\$14,654
Class sponsor (seniors)	\$14,405
Yearbook .....	\$13,646
Spring play.....	\$13,432
Variety show.....	\$12,850
Ambassadors .....	\$12,055
Peer Leadership.....	\$10,569
Newspaper .....	\$9,726
National Honor Society.	\$9,158
Choral director .....	\$8,566
Class sponsor (juniors)..	\$7,980
Varsity club.....	\$6,608
SADD .....	\$5,270
Class sponsor (soph.) ...	\$3,797
Class sponsor (fresh.) ...	\$3,647
French club .....	\$3,212
German club .....	\$3,212
Latin club.....	\$3,212
Photo club .....	\$3,212
Let’s Help Out.....	\$2,983
Jazz combo .....	\$2,855
J. Kyle Braid program....	\$2,822
Spanish club.....	\$2,531
Pep band.....	\$2,142
Robotics .....	\$2,142
Drama club .....	\$2,070
Production assistant .....	\$2,070
Debate.....	\$1,911
Microfinance.....	\$1,553
Puzzle Club .....	\$1,553
ACE*/Red Devil Nation....	\$918
Total .....	\$225,605 (\$241,609)

\* Athletes Committed to Excellence



Friday night football games at Hinsdale Central (and Hinsdale South) will be a thing of the past if voters reject an April 2 referendum and the school board enacts \$3.1 million in cuts to help pay for much-needed repairs at the high schools. (file photo)