



Columbia Public Schools

Election Update

Questions & Answers

Dates to Remember

March 9 - Voter
Registration Deadline

April 2 - Last Day to
Request an
Absentee Ballot

April 4 - Last Day to
Vote Absentee

April 5 - Election Day

The Columbia Board of Education has called a special election on Tuesday, April 5, 2016, to submit a proposal for a no-tax-rate-increase bond issue and an operating levy increase to Columbia voters. The bond issue proposal requires 57 percent approval. The levy proposal requires simple majority approval.

Q. What is the amount of the proposed operating levy increase?

A. 65 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation.

Q. Why does the school district need a tax levy increase?

A. The tax levy increase is necessary to keep up with growth and to continue current operations. Local assessed valuation is nearly flat. Federal and state revenues are declining and unreliable.

Q. When did the community last approve an operating levy tax increase?

A. A 40-cent operating levy increase was approved by voters in 2012. Prior to 2012, voters last approved a levy increase in 2003.

Q. How will funds from the levy increase be spent?

A. The tax levy increase will generate an additional \$14 million in annual revenue. Those funds will be used to:

- Maintain continued operations and stop planned deficit spending as the school district continues to grow
- Operate new buildings including increased costs for utilities, transportation and required staffing
- Comply with unfunded state and federal mandates, such as homeless student transportation and federal nutrition requirements
- Support student needs for access to achievement and enrichment opportunities
- Recruitment and retention of high quality employees

Q. Is the district going to make any budget cuts to help its financial situation?

A. The district cut more than \$20 million and 250 staff positions from its budget between 2008 and 2011. The district worked to make cuts that would limit the impact on classroom instruction. For example, assistant principals and instructional coaches were cut. Further reductions will result in larger class sizes and losses in student intervention and enrichment programs.

Q. Why not use district reserves to cover the loss in funding?

A. Simply, the reserve fund is a savings account. In Columbia Public Schools, those funds are meant to be used to cover payroll and district expenses when revenue funds are not available as well as to cover unpredictable emergency expenses. For example, the district uses reserves to help meet cash flow needs from month to month due to the timing of when local, state and federal funding revenues arrive. Approximately 40 percent of the district's annual revenue is received in January after the payment of local property taxes. Without adequate reserve balances on June 30, the district would be unable to pay monthly bills until annual property taxes are paid.

Q. What is the amount of district reserves?

A. On June 30, 2015, the district operating reserves were 26.49 percent, or \$48.11 million. School districts should maintain at least two months worth of operating expenses in reserves, plus additional funds to cover unexpected emergencies. It takes approximately \$16 million per month to pay the district's operating expenses. Operating reserve funds are used to pay the bills until the annual property tax collection payments occur in December and January. Additionally, the district built up reserve balances with one-time federal stimulus funds to help with one-time expenses associated with the opening of new schools. The district also has reserve balances for restricted funds such as debt service and capital projects.

Q. What is the difference between a tax levy and a bond issue?

A. By law, bond issues only provide funds for new construction, renovation of existing facilities, and the purchase of capital technology and equipment. Tax levy funds are used to pay for operating costs such as salaries, benefits, utilities, materials and supplies.

Q. What is the amount of the proposed no-tax-rate-increase bond issue?

A. \$30 million. The bond will allow the district to maintain and improve our facilities and to meet the needs of our growing community as outlined in the school district's long-range facilities and bond plan.

Q. How will funds be spent?

- A. The \$30 million bond will address three main areas:
- **Construction** - \$20 million will be used for new construction and future growth plans, including:
 - \$6 million will be used to purchase land and design a new middle school to alleviate middle school overcrowding in south Columbia.
 - \$11 million for elementary school addition(s) to address continued community growth and eliminate trailers.
 - \$3 million for a kitchen expansion at Gentry Middle School to address growth and allow for more freshly prepared food. Currently, two middle schools, Smithton and Lange, are equipped with regional kitchen space for meal preparation for the school district.
 - **Building Improvements** - \$8 million will be used for building improvements.
 - \$5 million for safety and security improvements, renovation and repair of buildings, HVAC systems, exterior paving and electrical systems.
 - \$2 million for roof replacements and repairs.
 - \$1 million for outdoor athletic improvements at Gentry, Lange and Smithton middle schools. The middle schools are in need of tracks in order to be equitable with Jefferson, Oakland and West middle schools.
 - **Technology** - \$2 million for wireless network infrastructure expansion, replacement of network switches, servers and storage area networks.

Q. Why is there a need for these items?

A. In Columbia Public Schools our vision is to be the best school district in Missouri and our mission is to provide an excellent education for all students. Strong programs and class sizes; up-to-date classroom technology; and safe and secure buildings contribute to that vision and mission. The bond issue proposal is to maintain and improve our facilities and to meet the needs of our growing community as outlined in the school district's long-range facilities and bond plan. The Board of Education has adopted the following goals based on a study and evaluation of district facilities:

1. Reduce overcrowding in schools, including reducing the number of trailers
2. Improve the learning environments in all schools and all facilities
3. Increase the functional life and operational/efficiency of district buildings

Q. What about the projects approved in previous bond issues?

A. The district is making significant progress on the projects approved in the 2010, 2012 and 2014 bond issues. Since the inception of the plan, the school district has reduced the number of trailers by more than half. By 2017-18 there will be an estimated 67 trailers remaining. The school district has successfully built and opened Alpha Hart Lewis Elementary School, Battle High School and Battle Elementary School. Beulah Ralph Elementary School will open in August 2016. Building additions are complete at Shepard Boulevard and West Boulevard elementary schools and additional gym space has been added to Hickman and Rock Bridge high schools. Air conditioning installation projects are also complete. Rock Bridge High School stadium renovation project is underway and an early childhood learning center is under construction and both are set to open in 2017. Plans for a new elementary school in east Columbia are being finalized with the school set to open in 2018. Major renovations at Douglass High School will begin this summer. The school district has also continued to address existing building maintenance needs such as roofs and paving.

**Columbia Public Schools Facts
Did you know...**

- Student enrollment has increased by more than 1,000 students in the last 10 years; another 1,000 students are projected over the next five years.
- 18,012 students PreK-12 are enrolled, making CPS the 7th largest school district in Missouri.
- To date the school district has eliminated 63 trailers. In 2010, there were 164 trailers in use; today there are 101. When the elementary school in east Columbia is completed in 2018 there will be an estimated 67 trailers left.
- There are 35 school buildings and 3 support facilities.
- The district maintains 3.23 million square feet of building space and 2.3 million square feet of roof space.
- More than half the buildings are 40 years old or older. Only three schools are less than 10 years old.

Estimated cost of a 65-cent operating levy increase to a homeowner

Actual Value of Home	Annual Cost	Monthly Cost
\$100,000	\$123.50	\$10.29
\$150,000	\$185.25	\$15.44
\$200,000	\$247.00	\$20.58

Estimated cost of a 65-cent operating levy increase to a business owner

Actual Value of Business	Annual Cost	Monthly Cost
Per \$1,000,000 Actual Value (\$333,000 Assessed Value)	\$2,145	\$178.75