

Why does Sisters need a new elementary school now?

Sisters Elementary School is currently operating at 106% of optimal capacity. Projections for the 2021-2022 school year show that the school will be at 111% of optimal capacity. Additionally, the City of Sisters predicts a 27-30% growth rate over the next ten years, which will only increase the overcrowding.

Building a new elementary school will also allow 5th grade to move back into the elementary school, creating additional needed space at the middle school level.

There are several benefits to passing this bond now.

- The 2001 School Bond is retiring and the new bond can be passed with no increase in property taxes.
- There is a ~2 year design/construction period; waiting would put us even further behind the projected student capacity trends.
- Interest rates are very low, making now an impactful time to place a bond.

How does this bond raise money to build a new school, but not raise my taxes?

The funding amount was calculated based on the current estimated tax rates from the 2001 School Bond. As such, this levy will begin as the 2001 School Bond retires (completes) and there will be no increase in the estimated tax rate.

How is this bond different from the bond approved in 2016?

Measure 9-108, passed in 2016, generated funds to invest primarily in safety and security projects across the district schools and facilities. The major project funded by the 2016 bond was the renovation of the track and surrounding stadium, a necessary project given that the track had been condemned and deemed unusable. Additional dollars went to upgrading to secure school entrances, security cameras and projects to bring all the schools in line with Americans With Disabilities Act regulations.

If the bond passes, what will become of the current Sisters Elementary School property?

There are a lot of exciting ideas with regard to how the current Sisters Elementary School building can be used as a community asset. The building will house students for the next two years, allowing ample time for the district to host a series of community engagements with voters and stakeholders to understand the greatest needs and best possible uses of the building. The district respects the value of this asset for the whole community and embraces the responsibility of using this asset for the best outcome of our voters.

Will current bond proceeds be used for ‘deferred maintenance’ that was to be addressed with the 2016 bond?

The 2016 bond funded 100% of the projects included in the original scope and also accomplished additional capital project work due to an unanticipated \$4M matching grant from the state. All of the ‘deferred maintenance’ identified in the 2016 Bond scope has been addressed. Capital from the 2021 bond will be used for building of the new elementary school and additional projects included in the Long Range Facilities Plan. On-going support and maintenance needs will also be addressed by this bond.

Why can’t the Sisters School District make improvements to the current Sisters Elementary School building to meet capacity demand?

Costs to upgrade the existing elementary school building to meet current codes and to provide the needed additional space could very well exceed the cost of building a new facility. A new building also allows the district to consolidate services within a shared campus. The new location will also lessen traffic on the East end of town and move the elementary school to a more secure location, away from Highway 20.

How does Covid-19 affect our need for a new elementary school?

The need for a new learning environment is not a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, it's something the SSD has seen coming for years. The capacity of the current elementary school building is not enough to meet the educational needs of our growing student population, regardless of social distancing requirements or other mitigation measures.

The timing of this bond honors both the growth in Sisters and the economic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. The new bond is timed to not increase our tax rate while meeting the challenge of more students in our schools.

How is this bond different from the levies the Sisters community is asked to vote on every five years?

Bonds and levies fund different things. Bond funds are used for tangible building changes and upgrades, while levies fund operational costs. The school levies that the Sisters community votes on every five years go directly to the classroom experience by funding positions that keep student to teacher ratios at optimal levels and helping to make Sisters Schools one of the most innovative and successful in the state of Oregon.

If the bond passes, when would the new elementary school be completed?

The construction of the new Elementary School building is expected to be completed in time for the 2023-24 school year.