

VOTE ON ISSUE 25!



Facts versus Fiction

On November 7, 2017, local residents will have the opportunity to vote on a school bond issue to improve the Southwest Local School District.

Below are some common facts versus fictions:

Fiction:

- This bond will cost \$78.8 million or 7.09 mills and the cost to taxpayers for our schools, with the passage of this levy, will be \$962, much more than what residents in other areas pay in taxes and earned income.
- The State should pay for this, not the taxpayers.
- Southwest has other income that should be used for these buildings, such as payroll income, rental income. They can sell old and not-used property to pay for the new schools.
- Fundraising is a great idea to generate the money needed for the new buildings.
- The district needs to do a better job in managing their budget. They just don't live within their means and lots of expenses could be cut.
- The district doesn't care about people on fixed incomes.

Fact:

- The proposal would require \$71.7 million in funds locally, equal to 6.99 mills. Homeowners would pay an extra \$244.65 per year for 38 years for each \$100,000 in market value. State law mandates that earned income cannot be used for a bond or to build schools.
- The State is providing \$26.6 million, equivalent to the cost of one of the new schools, when this bond passes. Our current master plan will receive state funding equal to 32 percent.
- SLSD is in the process of selling property that we no longer need, including the former Elizabethtown School acreage and Hooven Elementary. Proceeds from those auctions and/or sales will go toward operating expenses, not construction of new buildings. The total appraised value of both plots of land combined is \$390K. The total value of our 4 current and 2 former elementary properties, total, is around \$2.89M. This would not be enough to build one new elementary, let alone 3.
- Fundraising on such a level would be unprecedented. Bake sales, raffles or asking for donations simply will not be enough to provide quality buildings for our students.
- SLSD currently has a \$33 million operating budget, of which about 91% are fixed costs (salaries, utilities, insurance, state/county fees and other operating expenses).
- At its August 17th meeting, the SLSD Board of Education heard a presentation by representatives from Bradley Payne Advisors, LLC, on the proposed structuring of the new school bonds. This "wrap-around," helps keep all debt at or below the 6.99 mills. The advantage to local residents is that this will result in a lower tax rate being charged on the new bonds for the first 10 years. Instead of adding an additional 6.99 mills for the new bonds, the wrap-around would allow for the lowering of the millage rate on the new bonds to 4.49 for the first 10 years. At that point, the Activity Center bonds would be paid off and the millage on the new bonds would increase to the original proposed rate of 6.99 mills.

Fiction:

- We're still paying for the Activity Center, which costs too much and will be a long-term debt.
- The schools aren't really in that bad condition. It's all surface stuff that can be fixed easily and with little cost.
- The district is just guessing that more people are moving here. It's a false projection that they'll have more students
- There would be plenty of room in the schools if the district didn't take kids from outside of our community.
- The trailers are adequate to cover the needed room. We can just use more of them, both now and for the long-term.
- The district only cares about their agenda and is not taking into consideration the needs and desires of local residents.

Fact:

- The only bricks / mortar school bond that the taxpayers in our community are paying on is the Activity Center, which is \$87.50 per year on \$100K and expires in 10 years.
- For us to keep the current buildings and maintain them over the next decade, the projected cost is close to \$54 million. The last time residents in our community approved new money for the schools was in 2006.
- More than 1,000 new homes are projected to be built in the school district over the next several years, with a corresponding student enrollment boom. Modular trailers simply will not provide the best education for our kids – for the next 40 – 50 years. The high number of families moving to the area is the reason for our overcrowded schools. Between Sept. 1, 2016 and Sept. 1, 2017 – SLSD has enrolled close to 200 new students, many from the Parks of Whitewater, Whitewater Trails, Westbrook Trailer Park and Fort Scott. To put this number in perspective, we graduated 222 in May 2017.
- According to state regulations, school districts are permitted to “open enroll” students who reside outside of the district. SLSD currently has 35 open enrolled students, all of whom are in grades / classrooms that are not leading to the spacing issue.
- The trailers are only a short-term Band-Aid for the district's space concerns. Not only are the trailers designed for 4-5 years maximum, our enrollment has grown by 461 students over the past six years, with the bulk of students in the primary grades. More and more trailers are not an option, both in terms of locations for the trailers and the rental costs. Leasing just 10 trailers for 5 years costs more than \$450,000.
- SLSD actively sought out input from the community. All local residents were able to share their thoughts and concerns during an intensive process which spanned eight months. They included members of the clergy, business leaders, older adults, parents, students, district employees, and other community leaders. The process involved 15 meetings, including three Town Hall sessions as well as meetings of an Educational Visioning Team, Financial Advisory Team and Community Advisory Team. After input from more than 1,000 community representatives, representatives of the district's Community Advisory Team recommended approval of the master plan at the Board of Education's April 20 meeting.