

Questions and Answers – Kennedy Addition Information Night, January 20, 2016

INSTRUCTION

1.

Q. Where will the kids go? How will this affect them? What is the impact and transition over to the new building?

A. The children will remain in their current classrooms for the remainder of the school year. Although the project is starting soon there will be little impact to the day to day operations of Kennedy School. Information will be sent home to parents before the projects begins outlining the timeline and scope of the project and any changes to arrival and dismissal. Please be assured that the safety of our students will continue to be our top priority.

2.

Q. What is the likelihood of this (the addition) happening?

A. The Board approved the project at the December meeting. The project will be complete in 5 phases. The timeline for the phases can be found on slides 29-31 of the Kennedy School Addition slideshow located on the homepage of the SD81 website under the Kennedy Project Information tab.

3.

Q. Will this mean more teachers?

A. Yes, we will hire additional teachers to reduce class size and support growing enrollment at Kennedy School. The Boards goal on class size can be found on Slide 5 of the Kennedy School Addition slideshow located on the homepage of the SD81 website under the Kennedy Project Information tab.

4.

Q. Do you think enrollment will be as much in the future?

A. The 5-year enrollment trend has indicated that the rise is not an exception. There are 3 large cohorts in grades K, 1st, 2nd grades. We already know that there are 91 preschoolers transitioning into Kindergarten next year. Historically, in addition to children entering our kindergarten program who attended our PreSchool, there have been between 60-75 new families to enroll in Kindergarten the past 3 years. Currently, there is nobody on our waiting list for PreK, but we have additional preschool screenings taking place in February, April and May, where there are 20 available spots each screening date. The full-day Kindergarten is a very attractive option for families.

5.

Q. What are parents supposed to do to help?

A. Be supportive, spread the word. Clear misconceptions about how the project is being funded. Talk to neighbors about the project.

FINANCE

1.

Q. Are our taxes going to pay for this or not? Why are you spending this money when there is no need to do it?

A. Yes, taxes will pay for this project because 76% of the District's revenues come from property taxes. The District will use existing funds on hand (operational budget) to pay for part of the project and working cash bonds. The Board is committed to maintaining a flat bond and interest rate for the community. Increasing enrollment requires additional space to meet the needs of our students at Kennedy School.

2.

Q. Why wasn't the public made aware sooner to adding onto Kennedy?

A. The board, finance and facilities committees have been discussing the need for this addition since November of 2014. Kennedy has been running out of room for several years and the safety as well as instructional impact on kids has been discussed.

3.

Q. How is this able to go through not using a referendum?

A. Under the Illinois State Statutes, the District has the ability to issue Working Cash Fund Bonds under the Debt Service Extension Base authority. Because the District is doing an addition, a formal referendum is not required.

4.

Q. When do the bonds pay off?

A. The Lincoln Middle School referendum bonds will be paid off in levy year 2030, possibly sooner depending on the interest rates. The Working Cash Fund Bonds will pay off in levy year 2034.

5.

Q. Why not use the Catholic School?

A. The Catholic schools are not an option. St. Maria Goretti is currently being used as a Catholic School. St. Beatrice is being used as a Polish School. (Mayor Piltaver also clarified: they are using half of St. Beatrice School and they are going to use more of it. Saint Beatrice School is not an option.)

6.

Q. I noticed in the drawing you're enclosed teacher parking.

A. Yes, for the safety of the kids.

7.

Q. Why are you spending this money when there is no need to do it?

A. There is a need. Enrollment has been increasing over the past five years. Kennedy School 62% over practical capacity.

8.

Q. How is this able to go through without going through the referendum?

A. Many school district have the authority to issue debt without a referendum under the PTELL approved Debt Service Extension Base. It is like a home equity loan. The District issues Working Cash Fund bonds under the statutes that "fit" within the limits of the DSEB.

9.

Q. Is that why we have the tax levies? To stock pile this money, even though reasons for these tax levies were given to us. It just seems after the fact that all these levies all of a sudden it is going to be used for Kennedy. Why weren't we aware. I'm not adverse, we need more room. It was secretive. It seems we got a slick guy who came up with just this side of the law, just so far so not to have a referendum. That's what people in village are having. Pulled another fast one.

A. Every committee meeting we held was a public meeting. Five years ago the board began reviewing all the budgetary items and managing expenditures to "save" for future maintenance needs. We used some of our fund balances for project during the 2015 summer for security purposes (doors, fire alarms, parents buzzed into locked buildings). We continue to use prudent fiscal management and will use fund balances when possible to maintain lower tax rates. The District will need to restructure the referendum bonds in 2018 or there will be a hit to tax payers. We are going to use those savings to maintain a flat bond & interest rate. We are not just addressing 21st learning (it gets addressed at end of project) Life safety issues are being addressed immediately.

10.

Q. We feel like this snuck up on us, right before Christmas.

A. We are sorry you feel that way. This wasn't the first time it was discussed.

11.

Q. When are the refinancing of the bonds paid off?

A. The LMS bonds will be paid off in levy year 2030. The goal is to refinance those bonds when they become callable and flatten the bond and interest levy so there are no additional increases to the property owners levy as a result of the District financings. The Kennedy school working cash fund bonds will be paid off in levy year 2034. Based on the current equalized assessed valuations for the District - the bond and interest levy will decrease in levy year 2015 from 95 cents to 77 cents. The board's goal is to maintain a 77 cents, or lower, bond & interest tax levy.

12.

Q. We haven't been approved for bond yet? If we aren't approve then what? No tax exempt bonds?

A. We hope to know by the February meeting. If we are not approved for the Qualified School Construction Bonds then the district will issue tax exempt bond.

13.

Q. You keep saying you post on you tube - many don't post on you tube and don't know what it is. They don't know what is going on. You think they are going to come out? You're printing didn't mean anything.

A. That's why we sent out 6,000 flyers. We can only put so much in a mailing. So we invited the community to come and see Kennedy School as well as learn about the project.

14.

Q. What happens when state doesn't approve? You're making decisions that the state will make a decision in your favor.

A. The District will issue tax exempt bonds if we are not approved for the Qualified School Construction Bonds. The bond markets still have historically low interest rates and it is a great time to borrow for this type of project. The District will issue Working Cash Fund bonds under our Debt Service Extension Base authority.

15.

Q. Why are you moving forward before you have cash in the basket?

A. We are moving forward because we have a five-year plan to pay for the addition and renovation. The District included flexibility if there are changes in state funding to allow us fund the project as needed. It was a carefully thought out plan.

16.

Q. If you don't add on to the school, what will happen?

A. We will continue to have overcrowding. Higher classroom sizes affect student achievement. We've thought through many scenarios including converting vacant industrial buildings, mobile classrooms, and moving students to Washington.

ARCHITECHT:

1.

Q. Not much parking is being added. Why?

A. The site is restrictive, however there are still 2 areas of parking and parking is being added.

2.

Q. Why is there a pond?

A. It is a retention area for flooding. It is being moved but it is the same amount of space. If it were to be paved that would affect neighbors.

3.

Q. Flow of drop-off lanes?

A. The entrance leads the drop off with a continuous flow, and wont block the parking lot, which will in turn be more organized. The new traffic flow will get cars off the streets and reduce the impact on local traffic.

4.

Q. When will parking happen?

A. Phase 1

5.

Q. What if enrollment drops?

A. Enrollment has not dropped in 5 years, it is a statistical trend.

6.

Q. We flood, why aren't they increasing the retention area?

A. We will be increasing it according the new village codes. Also, drain tiles will be added underground to absorb rain water.

6.

Q. Why not consolidate Washington and Kennedy?

A. Washington, based on the facility assessment, has the room to meet the needs of the larger cohorts that are coming up. Separate facilities are needed due to the different age groups. This school is also already maxed out and we are using almost all of the land mass. Also, adding floors would not be optimal. In addition, when you add more you need to add more detention pond space. Now there are water restrictions and there is a great area of untouchable (detention pond) land. In short, the land does not support this.

7.

Q. In the plans, it says we are building here because there are more children. What about when they move to Washington.

A. We took a look at all three schools capacity. They have room to absorb these students when the cohorts move up. We considered expanding Washington but that would remove their playground, and adding an additional floor would not be supported by the existing structure.

8.

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A. We took a look at all three schools' capacity. They have room to absorb these students when the cohorts move up. We considered expanding Washington but that would remove their playground. Adding an additional floor would not be supported by the existing structure.

9.

Q. Do these phases affect our children during the school year?

A. No, the students will not be affected. The phases will begin during the school year. However we have a plan in place that will not impact the day to day operations at Kennedy School.

10.

Q. When will Floor 1 Phase be done?

A. Winter 2016

11.

Q. Could you build on the parking lots if you wanted to expand in order to consolidate Washington?

A. The District is not interested in moving from a grade level center concept. Furthermore, there is not enough land at Kennedy to add an addition that would be large enough to accommodate 300 additional children.

12.

Q. Would you hire 17 more teachers if there are 17 more classrooms?

A. The district will add the number of teachers to address growing enrollment and maintaining the Board's class size goal.

13.

Q. How will we afford 9 more teachers?

A. We are not adding 9 more teachers. The additional cost of adding teachers will be included in the FY17 budget.

14.

Q. Where will this money come from to run the school?

A. We will manage our finances prudently and pay for this out of our current operating budget.

15.

Q. Will our library and media storage be expanded?

A. Yes.