**Frequently Asked Questions**

The process inspired many questions from committee and community members alike.

**Q:** How would this be funded and how would it affect me?

**A:** Across the state, school facilities projects are primarily paid for by voter-approved bonds or levies. Currently, the 2015 tax rate for schools in the Methow Valley is $1.72 per $1,000 of assessed property value - the lowest rate in Okanogan County and the lowest among all districts in the state with a similar assessed value.

The Facilities Planning Task Force is recommending two levies to be on the ballot in April:

1.) An 800 thousand dollar Transportation/Vehicle Fund Levy; and

2.) A 4.5 million dollar Capital Improvements Levy.

By law, the Transportation Levy may only be used for the purchase of school buses and is a two year levy. For 2015 and 2016, this levy would result in a tax increase of $.31 per $1,000 of assessed property value in our school district. We are also recommending a 4-year Capital Improvements Levy, which would result in a tax increase of approximately $.86 per $1,000 of assessed property value.

The committee recommends a capital levy because it is more cost effective than a bond for these types of projects. Unlike a bond, a capital levy provides resources on a "pay as you go" system and therefore does not accrue any interest expenses.

**Q:** What is the difference between these special levies and the regular Programs and Operations (P&O) Levy that will be on the ballot in 2016?

**A:** The state does not fully fund the costs of K-12 education. We rely on local levies to bridge the gap between what the State provides and what it actually costs to educate our students. There are a few different types of levies and they are intended to meet different needs. The P&O levy, formerly called the Maintenance & Operations (M&O) levy, provides 22% of our operating budget and helps to pay for educational programming, related supplies, utilities, and other day-to-day costs of running schools. This levy can be run for a maximum of four years and is scheduled to expire next year, so a replacement P&O levy will be on the ballot in 2016 to maintain current funding through 2020.

Bonds or special levies, like the levies the Task Force is considering, are needed for major repairs and improvements to our school facilities. The lists of proposed work generated by the Facilities Task Force are all examples of major improvements and repairs that are not covered through the P&O Levy, which is why the Task Force is suggesting the district run Capital Improvement and Transportation Vehicle Fund levies. These levies must be accounted for separately from the district's general fund and can only be spent on capital improvements / repairs and vehicle purchases, respectively.

**Q:** How have recent levies and bonds been used in our district?

**A:** Yes, the Task Force believes they are. As we have dealt with the LBHS roof issues and as we have endured more and more cuts from state funding, we have relied on the patience and creativity of our staff and students to "hold off" on necessary improvements. Several deferred items have now reached a tipping point. We face significant repairs (e.g., the chiller, our buses, track, tennis courts, etc.) and without making these investments we risk either serious safety liabilities or cutting back on the options available to our students. The Task Force has carefully studied and prioritized the school district's needs. We believe that none of these recommendations are luxury items - these are basic, fiscally responsible needs.

**Q:** Are all of these projects necessary right now?

**A:** Yes, the Task Force believes they are. As we have dealt with the LBHS roof issues and as we have endured more and more cuts from state funding, we have relied on the patience and creativity of our staff and students to "hold off" on necessary improvements. Several deferred items have now reached a tipping point. We face significant repairs (e.g., the chiller, our buses, track, tennis courts, etc.) and without making these investments we risk either serious safety liabilities or cutting back on the options available to our students. The Task Force has carefully studied and prioritized the school district's needs. We believe that none of these recommendations are luxury items - these are basic, fiscally responsible needs.

**Task Force Background**

The Facilities Task Force, co-chaired by community members Sarah and Erik Brooks, is made up of more than 20 participants, including students, parents, teachers, staff, and community members from the Methow Valley school district.

Building on the detailed work of previous Facilities Committees, we were charged with recommending a Facilities Improvement Plan to the Superintendent that identifies high priority needs and projects for our schools in the next four to six years.

**AND HERE’S WHAT WE LEARNED:**

- Fiscally responsible investments that we can make though this process will save the district and our community funds in the long run;
- Significant improvements are required to make all of our schools safer and to protect our community’s investments in our buildings and grounds; and
- We have opportunities to enrich teaching and learning for all students.

Before making our final recommendations for a potential April 2015 levy, we want to hear from you about our project ideas.

Please attend the community input session on Monday, February 23rd from 6-7pm at Methow Valley Elementary School, or, submit comments and ideas online at www.methow.org by February 28th.

**Share Your Thoughts**

We want to make sure that our recommendations make wise use of limited resources, are prioritized according to greatest need, and support our students. Tell us what you think of the ideas we have outlined.

Please attend the community input session on Monday, February 23rd from 6-7pm at Methow Valley Elementary School.

Or, submit comments and ideas online at www.methow.org by February 28th.
PROJECT IDEAS

Our Task Force is considering the following ideas to improve the educational experience of students throughout our district. The first four items would be part of a Capital Improvements Levy, and the fifth would be a stand-alone Transportation/Vehicle Fund Levy.

Capital Improvements Levy

1. **Invest in Improvements to Methow Valley Elementary School**
   - Built in 1963 as the high school, MVES has undergone major renovations in 1978 and 1994. Twenty years later we also find a building that has been remarkably well-cared for but is in need of some basic attention to ensure safety, provide responsible maintenance, and enhance teaching and learning.
   - Among our priorities for improvements at MVES are: insulating the Cub gym, replacing the flooring in the school, addressing safety and efficiency needs in the kitchen, ensuring all spaces have adequate ventilation and heat, and providing basic enhancements (e.g., adequate ventilation and heat) to the staff area in the repair bays.
   - The bus barn includes a wooden bus garage that is no longer useful and, in fact, gets in the way of using the repair bays efficiently. We recommend removing this structure and providing basic enhancements (e.g., adequate ventilation and heat) to the staff area in the repair bays.
   - **Cost Estimate**: $1.5 million

2. **Invest in Improvements to Liberty Bell High School**
   - Built in 1995, the LBHS roof has required a lot of attention and these essential repairs have consumed recent facilities related bonds and levies. Other improvements, however, are necessary for safety reasons, to protect our existing assets, and to further support current teaching and learning.
   - Examples of improvements and maintenance required at LBHS are: replacing the floor (19 years old), repairing cracked sidewalks, addressing the kitchen’s needs for improved safety and efficiency, replacing a chiller that no longer works, providing temperature control for our district-wide technology server room, updating the weight room (which requires equipment upgrades and currently uses makeshift horse stall mats as flooring), safety updates in our tech ed classrooms, ensuring adequate water supplies in the building facilities, and classroom furniture to support project-based, collaborative learning.
   - **Cost Estimate**: $1.5 million

3. **Invest in Improvements at the Twisp Campus (The Independent Learning Center and the Bus Barn)**
   - Housed in one room between the Methow Valley Community Center and the Bus Barn, the ILC’s 25 current students are tight on space. We recognize that a long-term solution is necessary, but as the district contemplates future growth for the ILC, we are suggesting short-term improvements like classroom furniture, upgrades to existing technology, and storage to improve efficiencies and better suit the student population.
   - The Bus Barn includes a wooden bus garage that is no longer useful and, in fact, gets in the way of using the repair bays efficiently. We recommend removing this structure and providing basic enhancements (e.g., adequate ventilation and heat) to the staff area in the repair bays.
   - **Cost Estimate**: $250 thousand

4. **Improve Campus Grounds at Liberty Bell Jr/Sr High School and Methow Valley Elementary School**
   - We are fortunate to have 110 acres of fields and play areas and we embrace the idea that our school campus serves the whole community. Like all homeowners know, however, maintaining this many acres takes time and attention.
   - **Examples of improvements and addressing safety and efficiency needs in:**
     - Insulating the Cub gym,
     - Replacing the flooring in the school,
     - Repairing cracked sidewalks,
     - Insulating the Cub gym,
     - Repairing the tennis courts at MVES
   - **Cost Estimate**: $1.25 million

5. **Transportation/Vehicle Fund Levy**
   - Our current buses are an average of 10 years old. Several buses are so old that we no longer receive state support for their maintenance and repair. As a result, we spend $300-500 each year out of our General Fund to pay for repair on buses that other districts would have retired or surplussed. This money could be better spent on teaching and learning. Our Task Force recommends the district purchase six new buses over the next two years to start the process of updating our fleet. New buses can generate significant savings in repair costs and they will also qualify for state "depreciation" funds, allowing us to continue to replace our fleet over time.
   - **Cost Estimate**: $800 thousand

Task Force Timeline

- **March 2009**: Facilities Committee Convened to address LBHS roof
- **April/May 2014**: Task Force analyzes facilities needs and shares information publicly on website
- **June 2014**: Task Force reviews community input and uses it to form this sharing document
- **July, 2014**: Carlton Complex Fire erupts and Task Force, Superintendent and School Board push "pause" button on our work
- **February 2015**: Task Force refines project lists and seeks public input
- **March 11, 2015**: Superintendent makes recommendation to School Board about potential levy