

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

A: A **2009 Bond** was used for a new roof at LBHS. A **2010 Capital Projects/Technology Levy** funded technology infrastructure upgrades, the IT Technology position, roof repairs at MVES, and the purchase of iPads, classroom computers, and Video Production/Digital Photography equipment. The **2012 Technology Levy** further supported campus technology via equipment purchases, instructional resources, and staff development. And finally, the most recent **2012 Bond** allowed for heating systems upgrades at MVES and lighting upgrades district wide - resulting in significant annual energy savings - and fire suppression system upgrades at both MVES and LBHS.

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** in order 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: 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.

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.

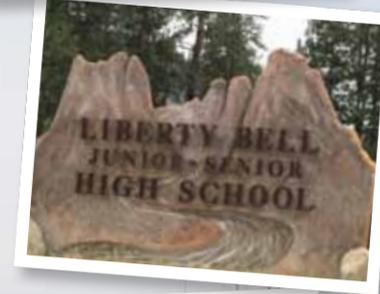
Facilities Planning Task Force

A Report to the Community 2.0

In early July 2014, the School District's Facilities Task Force sent a Report to the Community sharing our recommendations on facilities improvements to ensure that every student experiences a safe, healthy, and effective environment for learning. Soon after we mailed that report, the Carlton Complex Fire erupted. We hit the "pause" button on our work.

Now, seven months later, we recognize that the facilities needs we identified last spring remain. Our Task Force has re-started our efforts and we are once again ready to share our current ideas...

...and to hear what YOU think!



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.**

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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 an emergency safety and notification system, dryvit/soffit repairs along the roofline, and providing classroom furniture that "fits" our students and a growing enrollment. By continuing to care for this building we can protect an important community asset.

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 flooring (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.

We have several grounds-related priorities including:

Repairing the tennis courts at MVES -- these courts are used not only by our tennis team and PE classes, but also by a significant number of community members. The courts have deep surface cracking and need immediate attention in order to avoid a complete rebuild.

Update the MVES playground to be ADA compliant and to provide more opportunities for children to play -- our current playground is not accessible for children with special physical needs and improving the playground was noted as a top priority by students at MVES.

Resurface our Track at LBHS -- the track was originally installed with

an expected life of 10 years. Now 19 years old, it is so damaged that at a recent home track meet, athletes could not use the regular starting or finish lines.

Add a regulation soccer field next to the baseball field

-- this field could be used by high school teams and for youth community soccer as demand for field space in the Valley rises beyond supply. Currently our soccer field is shared with football and track, creating practice conflicts in season.

COST ESTIMATE: \$1.25 million



ABOVE/BELOW: Large cracks and deteriorated surfaces put the track and the MVES tennis courts very near the end of serviceable use.



ABOVE: A relic from Allen Elementary, the kitchen mixer exemplifies one of many recommended improvements to kitchen safety and efficiency.



ABOVE: At 19 years old, the flooring at LBHS is well beyond its expected life and due for replacement.



ABOVE: The pea gravel currently in use at MVES playground creates accessibility issues and is a major factor in the wear and tear on district cleaning equipment.



ABOVE: Our aging bus fleet sits just in front of a wooden structure that is no longer useful and limits both the versatility of our Bus Barn facility and accessibility to the ILC.

Transportation/Vehicle Fund Levy

5.

ENSURE SAFE AND EFFICIENT STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

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 \$30-\$40K each year out of our General Fund to pay for repair on buses that other districts would have retired or surplused. This is money that 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

