

Proposed Bond Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What projects would the proposed bond and matching grant address?

A. The proposed \$4 million bond and \$4 million matching grant would provide \$8 million to fund the following projects:

- The replacement of modular buildings at Sweet Home Junior High School with new construction attached to the main building. The modular buildings were purchased in 1969 from Western Homes and house a multipurpose room/cafeteria and two classrooms.
- Facility improvements to the junior high's main building including electrical and plumbing system upgrades to extend the school's useful life.
- The installation of a tapered slope insulated roof panel system to the junior high's flat roof. This will provide sufficient slope for water to drain and stay out of the building instead of forming puddles in low spots causing leaks and water damage.
- Construction of a safety vestibule entrance at the junior high with adjoining office space providing access control.
- Safety, security and facility improvements at all district schools.
- District-wide energy savings improvements to reduce operating costs.
- Site improvements, demolition and equipping of projects and bond issuance costs.

Q. How were these proposed projects determined?

A. Seven public meetings were held to discuss school facility needs. In addition, over 600 community members, parents and staff members responded to a facility needs survey. The district's facilities department staff also evaluated schools to determine what projects would most economically improve building safety/security and extend the useful lives of school buildings.

Q. How can Sweet Home complete this amount of work without increasing the tax rate?

A. First, the \$4 million matching grant provides an opportunity to get twice the amount of work completed that a \$4 million bond would otherwise allow.

Second, the proposed bond would be structured to not increase the current bond tax rate of \$1.62 per \$1,000 of assessed value. Debt service payments for the proposed bond would largely replace debt service payments that were eliminated when the district refinanced a 2001 voter approved bond at lower interest rates.

Depending on interest rates, a final partial year payment may be necessary during the 2029-30 fiscal year at a tax rate that is less than the current bond tax rate before all district bonds are fully paid off.

Actual tax rates may differ, depending on interest rates incurred and change in assessed value.

Q. How did Sweet Home receive a matching grant commitment?

A. Sweet Home was one of 24 school districts that applied for an Oregon School Capital Improvement matching grant for the May 2017 election. Only three districts in the state, including Sweet Home, received a dollar for dollar match commitment if the proposed bonds pass. Five other districts received a proportionately smaller percentage on the dollar match commitment if their proposed bonds pass.

Q. What happens to the matching grant funds if Sweet Home's proposed bond measure is not approved?

A. If Sweet Home's bond measure is not approved, the grant funds will be distributed to another school district that passes a bond.

Q. Will the matching grant be available for future elections?

A. If the state facility grant program continues after the May 2017 election, it is not known if Sweet Home would be able to receive another funding commitment. The grant is competitive and there is limited funding available.

Q. If the proposed bond passes, how will we know the money is well spent?

A. The Sweet Home School District is fiscally accountable, having received clean external audits each year for over two decades. The District has also refinanced the 2001 bond twice at lower interest rates, eliminating over \$5 million in debt service payments for taxpayers.

If voters pass the proposed bond, an independent citizen oversight committee will be established to ensure accountability of bond expenditures.

Q. If the proposed bond passes, what projects will be accomplished at the elementary schools and high school?

A. Student safety and security would be enhanced at all district schools utilizing the proposed bond and matching grant funds.

The district is considering providing a universal card swipe system at primary exterior doors, door position sensors at all exterior doors, and auto lock-down systems.

The proposed bond and matching grant funds would also be used to upgrade emergency communication systems and cameras at primary locations.

Secure entrance features would also be incorporated into the elementary schools.

Funds would also be used to make energy savings improvements to reduce operating costs. In addition, funds would be used to continue asbestos abatement efforts.

Q. What specific security concerns would be addressed at the junior high school if the proposed bond passes?

A. Visitors to Sweet Home Junior High often encounter students before a staff member since the school has multiple entrances and the school office is located within the building away from any entrance.

The proposed bond and matching grant would fund the construction of a secured main entrance with adjoining office space providing access control at the junior high. Visitors would be required to enter the front lobby and then pass through the office for screening by staff before being allowed access to the rest of the building during the school day.

In addition, the junior high currently has structures detached from the main building, each with separate entrances. The proposed bond and matching grant would allow the junior high to be configured as one building with one main entrance to help provide access control.

Q. Would the district try to use local contractors if the proposed bond passes?

A. Yes. The District would engage local contractors by discussing bonding and insurance requirements, manpower availability, prevailing wage criteria, and types of materials that our local contractors are certified to install. Designs and project sizes would be managed to support those contractors. The District still has to publicly bid out the projects but these conversations would give local contractors the best opportunity to be awarded the work.