

Coos Bay School District

Bond Measure 6-166

Frequently Asked Questions

Question: What is the Coos Bay School District asking for?

Answer: After reviewing all of the District's facilities and facility needs, the Coos Bay School District Board has voted to include a \$59.9 million school bond measure (Measure 6-166) on the November 2017 ballot.

Question: What exactly is a school bond?

Answer: A school bond is the method school districts use to borrow money to build new or improve old facilities. Just as you might use a mortgage to buy a home or a home-equity loan to pay for a home improvement project, school districts borrow money for buildings by issuing bonds. Investors buy the bonds and are paid back through property taxes. Voters have to approve all school bonds.

Question: What would the money be used for?

Answer: With the bond money, the District would: 1) replace the Harding Building (built 1924) with a new 7th and 8th grade school; 2) replace Blossom Gulch (built 1954) with a new elementary school where Eastside Elementary stands today; 3) renovate and expand Madison Elementary School (built 1953); 4) renovate and improve Millicoma and Sunset Schools (built 1964 and 1957/1993 respectively).

Question: How much will this cost the tax-payer?

Answer: School bonds are repaid through additional property taxes. If repaid over twenty-five years, this proposal would add about \$1.60 per \$1000 of assessed property value. For example, if you own property in the Coos Bay School District with a tax value of \$200,000, your property tax would increase by about \$320/year. That's 88 cents a day.

Question: Are Any Matching Funds Available?

Answer: The District is guaranteed a \$4 million matching grant from the state if this bond passes. If it doesn't pass, that money will go to another district.

Question: Why do local taxpayers have to pay for school buildings?

Answer: Since the passage of Measure 5 in the early 90s, local school district operating budgets have been funded by the State through the State School Fund. This money covers what happens in the schools every day: salaries, supplies, maintenance, utilities, etc. The State School Fund does not and has never included money for capital improvements. School buildings belong to the local community and are paid for by the local community. Anywhere you see new or renovated schools in Oregon, it is because local voters have approved a school facilities bond.

Question: What about money from the Jordan Cove Energy Project?

Answer: Jordan Cove and the North Spit are in the Coos Bay School District. If Jordan Cove is built, it will triple the District's tax base. Money from Jordan Cove would dramatically reduce the cost of repayment of these bonds for the rest of the taxpayers, whether because of direct taxes on Jordan Cove or increased Community Enhancement Plan payments to the District.

Question: How do we know the money will be spent on these building plans?

Answer: By law, bond funds can ONLY be spent on capital projects as approved by the voters. The bond funds are never mixed with the District's general funds. They are accounted for separately and audited every year.

Question: What's wrong with the current buildings?

Answer: All of the buildings involved in the bond proposal, except for the newer part of Sunset, are over fifty years old. All of them need repair, renovation or replacement to meet modern standards for safety, security, earthquake strength, accessibility, efficiency, technology and space. Most are at or above capacity, and Coos Bay Schools enrollment is climbing again after years of decline.

Question: How have the buildings been maintained, and how will the District take care of new buildings?

Answer: The District spends more than 10% of its general fund budget—more than \$3 million/year—on upkeep, maintenance and repairs. Because of the age of the buildings and their many outdated systems, most of this goes into trying to keep everything functional. Little is left over for cosmetic projects and curb appeal. With new or wholly renovated buildings, the District could devote the same or fewer resources and still meet all the maintenance needs.

Question: Why replace Harding with a new 7th-8th grade building?

Answer: Right now, 8th graders share space on the main Marshfield campus and 7th graders are split between Millicoma and Sunset. The bond plan would put these students and their teachers back together in their own building. The Harding Building (built 1924) has served the community well, but an architect and engineering analysis tells us that trying to renovate it to modern standards isn't cost effective. Replacing Harding (but keeping the gym, which is newer) with a new building for 7th and 8th grades would separate those students from the high school but keep them close enough to allow partnerships with Marshfield's fine arts programs, career and technical classes, and advanced coursework.

Question: What's wrong with Blossom Gulch?

Answer: Blossom Gulch is literally sinking. It was built in 1954 on wooden pilings driven into fill. This foundation has now failed. The building is in the tsunami inundation zone under the State's new maps. That makes it illegal to build a new school on the same site. The District has space for a replacement school at the Eastside location.

Question: What's wrong with Madison?

Answer: Madison was also built in the early 1950s and needs comprehensive renovation to meet current standards. It has also been too small for years, with "temporary" classrooms that have long since become permanent. The bond would create a "like-new" expanded school while saving money by retaining the basic structure. Renovations would improve or replace electrical service, heating and ventilation, interior and exterior finishes, earthquake resistance, roofing, accessibility and more. They would also add new classroom and library space.

Why do Millicoma and Sunset need work?

Answer: Millicoma (built 1964) is now over fifty years old, with all of the same upgrade needs as for Madison. The classroom portion of Sunset was rebuilt following a fire, but that was more than twenty years ago—the age at which major building systems like roofs and heating and ventilation equipment need repair or replacement. Also, both Sunset and Millicoma were built for older students. The bond plan would enlarge the small, interior classrooms at Sunset to work better as elementary classrooms. Millicoma would get a new front entry design to meet today's security expectations.