

Looking back, moving forward

District proud of long history of fiscal integrity

Skyrocketing student enrollment that began more than 10 years ago prompted the community's first wave of capital investments in school facilities.

In 1994 patrons approved a construction bond to build Skyridge Middle School. Then in 1999, still facing huge growth challenges, overcrowded schools and aging facilities, Camas School District patrons approved a \$57.3 million school construction bond. Through state matching funds, impact fees, and investment earnings, the money grew to \$80 million! The passage of that bond was the dawning of an era that included building a new elementary, and a new high school, the remodeling and opening of the district's second middle school, property acquisition, classroom additions and much more.

The opening of Liberty Middle School this fall marked the end of the initial list of capital projects promised to its citizens in 1999. Today, growth continues. And so does the district's need to provide adequate school facilities for our students. Based on the district's track record, patrons can be assured that fiscal integrity, financial prudence and community engagement are still the hallmark of the Camas School District.

"The district remains dedicated to providing accountability to its patrons, assuring the highest level of fiscal

reliability," said Superintendent Mike Nerland.

According to Ina Evers-Martin, Director of Business Services, the district takes every opportunity to save taxpayer money. Citing examples such as refinancing bonds to capitalize on lower interest rates, collecting impact fees, and leveraging resources wherever possible, Evers-Martin said stretching district dollars has always been a priority. "The question we always consider – from budget development to purchases large and small - is how can we stretch our resources to assure our tax dollars are being spent in the most cost-efficient way. Our audit reports and financial statements indicate that Camas does an exceptional job in this area," she added.

One example of fiscal responsibility is how the district stretched tax dollars by reusing fixtures, cabinets, doors, lockers and windows at Liberty. Major structural changes were minimal.

This approach to maximizing resources is also evident in the design of Camas High School, which will allow it to be easily expanded, as recommended in the proposed bond package.

Cost savings can also be realized through the use of technology. District statements show a \$45,000 annual savings by using technology to reduce

paper/copying costs. Communicating with parents and patrons electronically is also financially beneficial, saving thousands in paper, postage and printing.

Interlocal agreements with surrounding school districts and Educational Service

District 112 help reduce costs for such items as athletic supplies, office supplies and technology equipment. A partnership with the City of Camas leverages the purchase of grounds and maintenance equipment and the district also takes advantage of a fuel bid structure that allows them to "lock in" fuel prices when they reach a low point. Bidding out paper, copiers, and other equipment and supplies helps keep costs competitive among vendors.

"The district has earned my trust as a fiscally prudent partner in delivering on the basic classroom and facility needs for the students in our community," said Bob Engel, parent and co-chair of the Camas Citizens for Quality Schools.

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Bob Engel, parent



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CAMAS
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A TRADITION OF CARING AND QUALITY

OUR
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WELCOME!



NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2006
**INFORMATION
GUIDE**

IMPORTANT FACTS ABOUT
THE FEBRUARY 6, 2007
CAMAS SCHOOL DISTRICT
CONSTRUCTION BOND &
REPLACEMENT TECHNOLOGY
LEVY

INSIDE:

- Message from the Superintendent
- Detailed Q & A Section
- Tax Assessment Scenarios
- Bond Costs
- Levy = Learning, Bond = Building
- Community Survey Recap
- Replacement Technology Levy Information
- A History of Financial Integrity



Message from Mr. Nerland

Superintendent, Camas School District

Dear Patrons;

It's hard to believe the first third of the school year is almost over. The holidays are upon us, and it's time to shift focus from school to home as we gather to spend time with our families. I, too, am taking a bit of a break to spend time with my wife and children but will also continue to work on the important issues of the district – specifically the major school measures that will be on the Feb. 6, 2007 ballot.

(See key projects at right.) This publication should answer in detail the questions you have about the capital projects bond proposal and the replacement technology levy.

"The support this community has shown for our schools for decades is to be commended."

The Camas School Board, administrative team and our facilities committee researched and studied the capital projects needs of our District, and thoughtfully considered input from the citizens before finalizing the plans for this Bond measure. The 40-member facilities committee which recommended the bond package has assured us that it is very comprehensive, yet not filled with "extras."

We are also serious in preserving and improving the great legacy given to us by past school boards, administrators, staff, parents and citizens. The support this community has shown for our schools for decades is to be commended. As growth in other areas of Clark County slows, it continues here in Camas. It is nearly impossible to drive in any part of our District and not see new developments sprouting – and that means more students moving into our already full classrooms. In fact, by the year 2010, the district is expected to be beyond elementary school capacity by nearly 1,000 students. We are seeing overcrowding at Camas High School after opening less than three years ago with room to spare.

As the number of students increases, it not only puts a strain on our schools themselves but on the entire infrastructure that supports the District's endeavors – transportation, sports, alternative offerings and community programs. The facilities that support these efforts need to be upgraded and expanded to help us provide a well-rounded educational experience.

The good news is...we are not asking taxpayers to pay for the entire \$90 million proposal – the district is eligible to receive \$13 million in matching funds from the state and we also will receive \$5 million in impact fees collected from local developers as they bring new projects online. I urge you to read the materials we provide, visit our schools, or call to ask any additional questions you may have. Then, on February 6, 2007, take time to consider the Bond proposal and exercise your right to vote.

KEY PROJECTS RECOMMENDED BY THE FACILITIES COMMITTEE AND FUNDED WITH THE \$90 MILLION BOND PROPOSAL:

- **Build new west-side elementary school**
 - » Grass Valley site
 - » 600-student capacity to relieve overcrowding on west side
 - » Creates neighborhood attendance areas
- **Build new east-side elementary school**
 - » Possibly utilizes McKeever Road site
 - » 600-student capacity to relieve overcrowding on east side
 - » Creates neighborhood attendance areas
 - » Utilizes JDZ's State matching eligibility
- **Rebuild Helen Baller Elementary**
 - » Oldest school in district
 - » Last remodel approximately 20 years ago
 - » Eligible for State matching funds
 - » Keeps the integrity of downtown campus
 - » Increases capacity from 400 to 600 students
 - » Replaces modulars with permanent construction
- **Convert JDZ to multi-use facility**
 - » Uses for State-required early childhood programs
 - » Centralizes all district support services, including community ed., technology department, special ed., and district office
- **Expand Lacamas and Dorothy Fox Elementary Schools**
 - » Adds classrooms, gymnasiums, core facilities
 - » Eligible for state-matching funds
- **Expand Camas High School**
 - » Originally designed for expansion
 - » Increases capacity from 1600 to 2200
 - » 12 classrooms, restrooms, locker bays, library, PE locker rooms
 - » PE instructional facilities
 - » Portable classrooms—will need by 2007
 - » Parking/site development
- **Relocate Camas Alternative Program to current district office**
 - » Provides permanent home for CAP, with room to grow
- **Re-Build Doc Harris Stadium**
 - » Increase seating from 1400 to 4000
 - » Includes lockers, new restrooms, concessions, storage
 - » Replaces turf and lights
 - » Coordinate additional parking at Helen Baller
- **Other field upgrades**
- **Expand transportation center**
 - » 50 additional bus parking spaces
 - » Additional lockers for bus drivers
 - » Video surveillance system
- **Property acquisition**
- **Deferred maintenance items throughout district**
- **Covered play area at Skyridge Middle School**

Community survey provides district valuable feedback on options

Our Schools are Your Schools. That mantra isn't just a catch phrase in the Camas School District. When the district is facing tough challenges, determining priorities or making important decisions, they ask the community for feedback.

The last professional survey was conducted in 1999 and district officials believed it was time to ask again. "It is so important for us to get feedback from our community," said Superintendent Mike Nerland. "We rely on surveying to help us make important decisions and to gauge how we are doing in the eyes of the public," said Nerland.

In October, a survey was conducted by Tom Eiland of Conkling, Fiskum and McCormick Research, the firm that conducted similar surveys in 1993 and in 1999. They interviewed 250 residents, collecting thoughtful answers to a series of questions.

The survey found that Camas residents are impressed with the overall performance of the district. Seventy-one percent of the respondents gave the district an A or B for its efforts. This is the highest grade the research firm has found in a school district during the past seven years.

Good teachers were most frequently cited as the primary strength of the district. Other aspects that impressed residents include quality education, cooperative work with parents, good curriculum and staff who care about kids.

Overcrowding, enrollment, and the fact that Camas is growing too fast were perceived to be the biggest problems facing the district. Concerns about the district have changed since the 1999 survey where drug abuse was seen as the biggest challenge facing the district.

When asked about the proposed Camas School District bond measure, 64% of the respondents favored the proposal. About 20% indicated they need more information before deciding.

District officials were pleased with the valuable information they received from the survey. "Obviously, this is important feedback that is very valuable to us as we plan for the future," said Nerland.

Good teachers were most frequently cited as the primary strength of the district...



Replacement Technology Levy critical to meeting student learning needs

Utilizing technology as a tool for learning is an important necessity and is used by teachers in every classroom across the district. That's why the board is also asking voters to approve a measure that will replace the current technology levy, set to expire in 2007. This is not a new tax for homeowners.

According to Assistant Superintendent Tanis Knight, computers and networks have fundamentally changed the way that the world communicates, collaborates, problem-solves and does business, and if students are to be ready for that kind of future, their learning environments must reflect that.

"To keep our students competitive in this high-tech, global society, we can no longer consider technology tools as luxury items or as "add-ons"; rather, they are modern tools to prepare students for their future. It is no longer a question of whether we can afford to provide them for our students. The question has changed...we must now ask ourselves, 'Can we afford NOT to?'" said Knight.

The replacement levy is estimated to cost \$.25 per \$1,000 assessed property value. A list of the types of items paid for with technology funds is listed in the Q and A section.

Levy = Learning, Bond = Building

There is an important distinction between what school M and O levies pay for and what capital projects bonds pay for. A levy is different than a bond in that it pays for essential learning services not covered by state education dollars. The state only pays for about 80 percent of a school district's budget, so local levies are necessary to bridge the gap in state support. Camas patrons passed a four-year replacement M and O levy last February.

Bonds can only be used to fund capital projects, including the building of new schools (and necessary equipment, furniture and supplies), renovations or remodeling. Bond elections are necessary because levy money cannot be used to build, remodel or improve school facilities. Bonds are generally financed over a 20-year period and are sold in increments as the funds are needed.



OUR SCHOOLS ARE YOUR SCHOOLS

Cost Breakdown for Bond

Program Title	Cost in Millions
ELEMENTARY PROGRAM <i>Eligible for \$12 million in state matching funds</i> Build two new elementary schools, (one on east side, one on west side); re-build Helen Baller; expand Lacamas and Dorothy Fox Elementary schools; convert JDZ to multi-use facility.	72.8
HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM <i>Eligible for \$6 million in state matching funds</i> Expand Camas High School; re-locate Camas Alternative Program	17.1
Doc Harris Stadium & Fields Re-build, increase seating; field upgrades	9.6
Transportation Expansion	1.2
Acquisition of property for future school sites	5.0
Modernization / Small Projects	6.8
Bond Costs	.5
Subtotal	113.0*
Less State Match	(18.0)
Less Impact Fees/Earnings	(5.0)
TOTAL BOND	90.0

**While the recommended bond proposal actually totals \$113 million, the district stands to gain approximately \$18 million in state matching funds plus \$5 million in impact fees. The district is able to capitalize on and grow local bond funding. Local support is significant in capturing these additional dollars for school facilities.*

VOTE! February 6, 2007

Example of Homeowner's Tax Increase: The projected increase is \$.62 per \$1000 of assessed value over the current 2006 bond taxes. If approved in 2007, homeowners will begin paying for the bond in 2008.

Home Value	2006 Rate per 1000	2006 Bond Taxes	Projected 2008 Rate per 1000	Projected 2008 Bond Taxes	Difference
300,000	\$2.20	\$660	\$2.82	\$846	\$186 (\$15.50/mo)
500,000	\$2.20	\$1,100	\$2.82	\$1410	\$310 (\$25.83/mo)



IMPORTANT ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION BOND AND REPLACEMENT TECHNOLOGY LEVY

Q. Why would my tax rate increase to \$2.82 from \$2.20? I thought Camas' building boom would have raised our assessed valuation so that even a bigger new bond would leave rates fairly neutral?

A. Although our assessed valuation has risen dramatically, a \$90 million bond is significant enough to have an impact on our tax rates. However, bond experts who are advising us say it's extraordinary that a \$90 million bond will increase the tax rate by only 62 cents per \$1000 of valuation. Thanks to our high tax base, building new schools is relatively affordable in Camas.

It is important to note that as homeowners' assessed valuations increase each year, the school tax rates decrease—we can only collect the amount of money that taxpayers approved in our bonds and levies.

Q. Why is this bond twice as much as the last bond?

A. There are two essential reasons. First, the bond asks for somewhat different types of buildings, and more of them. The 1999 bond issue provided for building the new Camas High School, Prune Hill Elementary, and the new transportation center, and set aside a very small amount of money to remodel what is now Liberty Middle School. This bond package includes two new elementary schools, a rebuild of Helen Baller, a high school expansion, and stadium rebuild.

Second, construction costs have skyrocketed in the years since a bond was put before the voters. For example, the cost to build an elementary school has increased from \$10 million to more than \$22 million.

Additionally, the consistent growth experienced in recent years has put a large number of students in modular buildings at the elementary level. The new schools and the expansion of existing buildings would move a great number of students back into buildings.

Q. Why shouldn't we continue to use JDZ as an elementary school, especially since we've just spent a lot of money to convert it for K-5 use?

A. JDZ's conversion to an elementary school was relatively inexpensive--\$250,000. However, the modifications made primarily centered on lowering counter and fixture heights to accommodate younger students. These changes will be utilized by the district's State-required early childhood programs for many years to come.

JDZ was built in 1968 in what is commonly referred to as a pod style. At this time the building needs considerable modernization but is in a configuration that does not lend itself to expansion. Also, because students enter and exit the classrooms from outside, a pod-style school can be more of a challenge in terms of security.

The proximity of JDZ to Helen Baller Elementary makes the task of creating a "neighborhood school" impossible. Additionally, Lacamas Heights Elementary is less than two miles away from Baller and JDZ. Building a new east-side elementary that is not in the downtown campus makes sense.

The cost of modernization at JDZ is \$17 million, but the cost to build a new school is \$22 million. Through its extensive investigation, the committee determined it is not a good use of taxpayer dollars to modernize a building that is nearly 40 years old, is in a style that is less than desirable, and in a location where the district doesn't need an elementary school. JDZ also qualifies for State matching funds that can be applied to the new east-side elementary if JDZ is decommissioned as a school.

It is a better return on the voters' investment to build a new elementary school that meets current building codes than to remodel the existing 40-year-old-structure. This is a good opportunity to spend a little more and get a new building in a much better location.

Continued...

Q. Why would you put administration in JDZ?

A. The answer to this question is a piece of a larger puzzle. Currently the Garfield building houses the Camas Alternative Program, Community Education, special services administration and the technology department. The Alternative Program is full and needs more classroom space, but it does not need a space as large as JDZ.

The district office is now in the modulars behind Liberty Middle School. The programs located there (superintendent’s office, curriculum and instruction, human resources, payroll, accounting, construction, reception, and registration) have outgrown the space available.

If we move the Alternative Program to the district office modulars and add two additional modulars there, the program will have a total of 10 classrooms and more than adequate space for program expansion. This program currently serves grades 9-12, but we hope to expand it to include grades 7-12. When the program moves to the district office facility, it could likely double in size.

At that time, the current district office, in addition to the other administrative offices from the Garfield building, would be moved to JDZ, centralizing district support services in one location that offers adequate space.

JDZ is also an excellent home for the State-required special education programs and preschools that are already located there. The security issue doesn’t apply to these programs as they are self-contained.

Q. What will happen to the Garfield building? Why don’t we modernize Garfield and keep Camas Alternative Program or administrative offices there?

A. The Garfield building was built in 1935 as an addition to the original Camas Junior High/Senior High School. While the building is safe for staff and students, it would be subject to today’s building codes and requirements if it were to be modernized in any way. It has been estimated that it would cost \$11 million to modernize it, and that figure does not add any additional square footage. Considering there are only twelve classrooms in Garfield, it doesn’t make sense to renovate it. Additionally, it is too small for the programs that are housed there.

Garfield is considered by the State as instructional space and is eligible for matching funds. Like JDZ, these matching funds can be applied elsewhere. Specifically, the eligibility can be applied to the high school addition if Garfield is decommissioned as instructional space.

Q. What if the mill closes? Or growth slows down for other reasons? Are we in danger of having too much capacity?

A. Our ability to predict the future is, of course, limited. As is standard procedure, the district’s demographer projects growth for five years and has indicated there should be a 5-6% increase each year until 2010.

At present, there is no substantial indication that the mill will close within five years. And, the community is much, much more industrially diversified than in the past, which would soften the impact of any one company’s departure. If the mill closed, the land would still be taxable at full value; the buildings could possibly drop in value by half, and the equipment would come off the tax rolls entirely.

This bond is a plan to address future growth, thus the board does not regard this proposed bond as cast in concrete. When voters approve a bond, the district is not obligated to spend all of the funds. If, for example, growth slows dramatically, the district would reevaluate its position and course-correct as necessary.

Q. If we’re merely going to be at capacity in 2010, don’t we want to build to meet our need for facilities in years beyond?

A. While projected growth must be addressed, we do not want to overbuild either. The board believes it must be conservative when considering building ahead of need. We do not want to be saddled with excess capacity and possible school closures in the future. But, as mentioned above, the board will be constantly re-assessing plans and will make adjustments as necessary and as feasible.

Q. Are we planning sufficient capacity to stay ahead of the problem in the future?

A. Two significant factors are considered when planning for future schools: bonding capacity and projected growth. A district’s bonding capacity is set by state law (5% of the district’s assessed valuation) and is the limit that a district can encumber in bond debt. This proposed bond package will bring the district near its capacity but will leave a safe amount for unforeseen occurrences.

The district uses a professional demographer to project enrollment growth over time; however, this estimate typically extends five years. As there are many factors which affect growth, there is a significant risk in “overbuilding” a district.

Q. Why are you running a technology levy? Is this an additional tax? What does it pay for?

A. This technology levy will replace the one set to expire in 2007—it is not a new tax. Currently homeowners are paying \$.22 per \$1,000 assessed valuation. This replacement levy is estimated to cost \$.25 per \$1,000 assessed valuation.

The technology levy pays for hardware, software, licensing, and infrastructure. Examples include computers, core curriculum resources used by students, on-line curriculum, skill-building technology, test preparation and phonics programs. The levy also allows for increased productivity such as on-line grade/assessment monitoring, classroom videoconferencing, web sites, e-mail, voice mail and student data management. If passed, it will also provide technology for the new schools in the district.

PROPERTY TAX ASSESSMENT SCENARIOS

Q. How will this bond measure affect my taxes given the significant increase in property tax assessments? Do my taxes for schools rise at the same rate as my assessment?

A. Many homeowners share a common misconception that an increase in the assessed value of their home automatically will result in a direct, corresponding increase in their tax bill.

A homeowner’s tax bill is the product of three separate factors:

- The amount of money levied by the taxing district, in this case the Camas School District. For purposes of the illustration below, **assume the school district is levying \$8 million to pay principal and interest on a bond.**
- The tax rate for the school district is determined by taking the assessed value of all of the taxable property within the school district (for the purposes of illustration, let’s assume a districtwide assessed value of \$4 billion) and
 - Dividing it by 1,000
 - Taking the resulting number (4,000,000)
 - Dividing the amount levied (\$8 million) by that number
 - This yields the tax rate of \$2 per thousand of assessed property value.
- The third factor is the assessed value of the taxpayer’s home. For the purposes of this illustration assume a home with an assessed value of \$400,000. The assessed value of the home, divided by 1,000 (\$400) is then multiplied by the tax rate (\$2) to determine the taxes owed, in this case the taxes owed would be \$800 (see Scenario A).

Scenario A	
Assessed Value*	\$4,000,000,000.00
Levy Amount	\$8,000,000.00
Tax Rate	\$2.00
\$400,000 Home Assessed value	\$800.00

Scenario B	
Assessed Value*	\$8,000,000,000.00
Levy Amount	\$8,000,000.00
Tax Rate	\$1.00
\$800,000 Home Assessed Value	\$800.00

Referring to Scenario B, we are assuming all property in the district experiences a 100% increase in assessed value. **The homeowner’s assessed value grows from \$400,000 to \$800,000, but the tax rate drops to \$1 per thousand. The resulting tax bill is \$800, the same as under Scenario A.**

This demonstrates that an increase in assessed value does not necessarily result in an increase in a homeowner’s tax bill.

Scenario C shows the assessed value of the home increasing by 100%, while the district’s entire assessed value remains stable at \$4 billion. The tax rate remains at \$2 per thousand of assessed value. The homeowner in this scenario would see their tax bill double. For this to happen, their home would have to double in assessed value while no other property in the district experienced an increase in assessed value. This is a situation which is not likely to occur.

Scenario D shows a 20% increase in districtwide assessed value and a 50% increase in the homeowner’s property. The result is a tax rate of \$1.6667, a home assessed at \$600,000 and a resulting tax bill of \$1,000. This represents a tax bill increase of 25%. This demonstrates that an increase in an individual homeowner’s assessment does not necessarily result in a direct, corresponding increase in their tax bill.

Scenario C	
Assessed Value*	\$4,000,000,000.00
Levy Amount	\$8,000,000.00
Tax Rate	\$2.00
\$800,000 Home Assessed value	\$1,600.00

Scenario D	
Assessed Value*	\$4,800,000,000.00
Levy Amount	\$8,000,000.00
Tax Rate	\$1.67
\$600,000 Home Assessed value	\$1,000.00

(25% Tax Bill Increase)

PRODUCTION ABOUT BOND AVAILABLE ON CABLE CHANNEL

A video production about the Camas School District’s \$90 million bond proposal will begin running in December on TV ETC Cable Channel 28. The segment features interviews with several students, parents and community members and provides a comprehensive overview of the bond proposal. You can view the segment on Sundays, Mondays, Fridays and Saturdays at 10 a.m. and again at 7 p.m.

- Scenario A Base
- Scenario B 100% Districtwide Assessed Value Increase
- Scenario C 100% Individual Home Assessed Value Increase
- Scenario D 20% Districtwide Assessed Value Increase
50% Individual Home Assessed Value Increase

* Assessed Value: The total value of taxable property within the Camas School District