

Hello Orchard Prairie Neighbors and School Families,

Thank you!

The Orchard Prairie School Board thanks the Orchard Prairie community for supporting Orchard Prairie Elementary. In the recent November election, over 50% of the voters supported the proposed bond to build a new school to meet the educational needs of the present students and children in our community. Unfortunately, a 60% approval rate is required by law to pass a bond. The Board would like to take this opportunity to outline the plan for the proposed bond as well as address some of the questions and concerns expressed by community members.

The School Board and community members have met regularly over the past two and half years to consider the needs of the school and community. A management company, Turner & Townsend Heery, and an architectural firm, NAC, managed this project, provided guidance, developed a basic design and estimated cost.

The buildings currently in use are the “original school” built in 1894 and the “Two Story building” built in 1971. The “original school” is an historical landmark representing the high value that members of the community place on education. The original school is meaningful to the community and is in the process of being placed on the historical registry.

The “Two Story building” received scores of “poor” in several areas on a recent inspection report. The building has been maintained well for over 50 years but does not meet the current standards for student safety, required per student space, access for people with disabilities, structural integrity and space for auxiliary staff such as the school nurse, social worker, administration, superintendent, and special education.

The school improvement committee, working with professional consultants, started with a grand plan incorporating everything that the students, teachers, and staff could possibly want. This was then pared down to include only the minimum facilities essential to staff and students. The result is a basic building with additional parking and improved driveway access with a total project cost of approximately \$8.7 million. The state will provide \$2.5 million in SCAP funding, leaving \$6.2 million needed via Bond.

The major improvements proposed for the new school include:

- A cafeteria which can also be used for P.E. and other group activities
- Suitable classroom size with a necessary number of teaching stations.
- One story building and single point of entry for accessibility and safety.

- Office space for auxiliary staff including the school nurse, social worker, administration, superintendent, and special education.
- Separate restrooms for staff and students.
- Improved driveway access, drop-off and pick-up area, parking and bus access.

We understand that people have varied opinions on what is best for the community. Based on community feedback, some of the hesitations to supporting the bond have included the following:

Can the current buildings be updated or remodeled? Can portables be added?

Renovation of the “Two Story building” was considered by the School Improvement Committee. The cost of renovation is over half of the cost of a new building and does not address the need for more space and the poor quality and the structural integrity of the 1971 building. The addition of “portables” was also considered but the committee advised that it would not be a cost-effective or long-term solution nor did it address safety concerns.

\$6.2 Million dollars is asking too much especially with the current high cost of living.

Since the establishment of the Orchard Prairie School in 1894, members of the community have rallied together and offered their resources to support education. During this period, the community has enjoyed one of the lowest tax rates of any school district in the state. Under the present laws, most of the funds for school construction must come from the district, not from the state funds. The district has not made any major improvements beyond normal maintenance and minor upgrades in the facilities of the school since 1971. Our small community has many wonderful benefits and, due to the size of our district and the inability for growth, we cannot spread the tax burden any farther. The time has come for us to step up and support a new school to be able to deliver a quality education for our children. The combined rate of the EP&O levy and the proposed bond is comparable to (and slightly less than) the rates of the neighboring districts, Mead, West Valley, and District 81.

Why do we need a gymnasium/cafeteria/auditorium? Can't the kids just play outside like we did in the “good old days”?

The students need a space to eat lunch each day. When this space is not being used for lunch, the tables can be moved which allows for an indoor space for students to complete P.E in the winter when they are unable to go outside. Our students complete P.E and recess outside whenever possible. When that is not feasible, students still need an opportunity

for physical activity. By including this all-in-one space instead of building a second gymnasium, or even full-size gymnasium, costs for the project were able to remain as minimal as possible.

Why do we serve out-of-district students?

Presently 35% of the enrolled students are out-of-district students. The families who don't live in the district bring their children to Orchard Prairie because they believe that the education that their children receive here is worth the extra effort and expense. The district receives money from the state for each student who attends the school whether they live in the district or not. The extra funding from the state for the out-of-district students enables the district to hire more teachers. All students benefit from the differing backgrounds and expertise of these teachers. These additional resources enable the school to more fully implement special education and meet the individual needs of the students. It is important to note that serving "choice in" students does not place any additional ongoing financial burden on the district.

We need your input!

This is a community project, and everyone has a right and a duty to express their opinions. Since the proposed tax will affect everyone in the district, we want to make sure the direction we move is the best for the community. It is unlikely that any plan will get 100% support but we hope that the outcome will be the best for the community with the minimal financial impact.

If you have any questions, thoughts, or concerns as we move forward in our joint pursuit to support our children's public education, please feel free to reach out via email or the included link below where your thoughts can be submitted anonymously.

Link to feedback: <https://tinyurl.com/4jayav3e>

Publicity regarding the previous bond measure

A mailer was sent to voters in the district in September. Flyers were distributed in October to each household and many voters were contacted personally through a group canvassing effort.

In October our school was featured on the front page of the Spokesman Review as well as by KXLY on the 6:00 evening news.

Spokesman Review:

<https://www.spokesman.com/stories/2024/oct/07/orchard-prairie-seeks-bond-to-replace-1970s-era-bu/>

KXLY:

https://www.kxly.com/news/historic-orchard-prairie-school-district-seeks-6-2-million-bond-for-a-new-school/article_aef6e81a-85c7-11ef-88f9-579be95df69b.html