



## An Open letter to Orchard Prairie Voters

My name is Joe Beckford, and I serve as the Superintendent and Principal for Orchard Prairie School. This is my third year at OPSD; in short order I have developed a close connection with the school, its students, staff, board, and community. Therefore, I have a great concern for the future of the school if it no longer would be allowed to operate due to the state of its facilities. This is not an idle concern, it is based on factual information.

External and internal assessments confirm that Orchard Prairie School's buildings are functionally obsolete and do not meet Washington's safety, security, and program standards. The school and district board have done a great job keeping its buildings up to their current condition. However, two of its four classrooms are in a building that was built 130 years ago and the other two classrooms in a facility built 53 years ago using modular construction – they've both aged out. The older (1894) building is the oldest in Washington still being used to house students. Renovating the current buildings is estimated at \$6.42 million, and that would not address all safety and security concerns, nor does it provide sufficient classroom spaces. A new, no frills school can be built for \$8.7 million. However, voter approval of the upcoming bond proposal is required in order to access \$2.5 million in funding from the state, which would leave only a \$6.2 million of cost to voters.

The district's board has reduced the size and scope of a new school from an initial \$12.3 million to the current \$8.7 million estimate. This estimate represents the base level of facility necessary to meet immediate space, expectations, and program needs. The new school has been redesigned and reduced purposely to balance facility needs with keeping the tax rate comparable to or below those of adjacent districts. If facility issues ever force Orchard Prairie to cease operating, its taxpayers will be absorbed by an adjacent district, undoubtedly with higher taxes, while Orchard Prairie will lose local control of its kids' education as well as control of educational costs. It is important to note that the school has capped the enrollment our facilities can accommodate. Consequently, as in-district enrollment grows, then fewer out-of-district students are being allowed to enroll. It is important to note the school has capped the enrollment its facilities can accommodate.

I have attached an article (reverse side) about a district that faced similar circumstances as Orchard Prairie. Unfortunately, that school and district no longer exist because its people did not believe the dire circumstances the school was facing. Everything being said is herein is true including the fact that, while a new school by necessity will raise property owners' taxes, the tax rate will still be below either of the two adjacent school districts either to which Orchard Prairie would be annexed. In the absence of Orchard Prairie, local property owners would be required to pay bond costs and levies to West Valley School District or Mead School District.

***Vote for Kids - Vote for Community – Vote for Local Control***

*(this communication has not been paid for at taxpayer expense)*



You are encouraged to gather information you may need to make an informed decision. If you have any questions about what I have said, please reach out to me or any Orchard Prairie board member. As a team, we sincerely think and act with everyone’s best interests in mind. A decision and planning for the future must be made now. The district is asking your permission to issue up to \$6.2 million in bonds. However, understand the district will only issue enough dollars in bonds required to complete the task.

Lastly, here are current tax comparisons for you to consider in looking the OPSD bond request and future tax options:

Property Assessment	OPSD PROPOSED Tax (@\$3.38/1000)	West Valley S.D. Tax* (@\$3.52/1000)	Mead S.D. Tax+ (@3.69/1000)
\$250,000.	\$ 834.50	\$ 880.00	\$ 922.50
\$350,000.	\$1183.00	\$1232.00	\$1291.50
\$450,000.	\$1521.00	\$1584.00	\$1660.50
\$550,000.	\$1859.00	\$1936.00	\$2029.50

***Orchard Prairie School will strive to remain the best option for students, families and taxpayers in our district***

NOTE: \* West Valley School District ran a bond election last Fall, which failed. Plans are to run it again.  
 + Mead School District just ran a bond election in February, which passed .

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