

# Meeting Notes

**Project:** Newberg School District Bond Planning

**Date:** June 1, 2020

**Subject:** Bond Development Committee Meeting

**Attendees:** Brittany Magallanes, Shannon Buckmaster, Mark Brown, Rebecca Piros, Ann Ziehl, Mary Jane Bachmeier, Drew Gallagher, Carr Biggerstaff, Emily Garrick-Steenson, Lydia Keuler, Reed Langdon, Scott Murphys, AJ Schwans, Jeremy Wright, Joe Morelock, Gregg Koskela, Larry Hampton, Luke Neff, Shanna Andres, Karina Ruiz, and Elisa Warner

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## Welcoming Remarks / Meeting Overview

Dr. Joe Morelock welcomed the Committee members. Karina Ruiz with BRIC Architecture delivered an overview of the meeting agenda. The general purpose of the meeting is to provide an update on events since the last Bond Development Committee meeting, discuss the timeline for a November 2020 bond, and review the bond package submitted to the Newberg School Board to determine if any adjustments should be made in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Brief Recap of Events since Last BDC Meeting

- In February 2020, the Bond Development Committee presented the recommended bond package for the Newberg School Board's consideration.
- Based on discouraging polling results, the School Board opted *not* to move forward with a May bond, but to instead delay the bond until November 2020.
- Several weeks after the Board's decision, the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated the closure of all Oregon school buildings for the remainder of the academic year. The pandemic has introduced great uncertainty concerning Oregon school districts' facilities needs moving forward. Also, it is unclear whether high unemployment rates and economic uncertainties will impact the level of community support for a bond.

## School District Bond Campaign Results across Oregon in May 2020

- Jeremy Wright with Wright Public Affairs shared the May '20 bond election results from across the

state. Encouragingly, a majority of districts showed support for funding capital construction projects for schools. Districts that successfully passed bonds included:

- St. Helens SD for \$55 M
- Centennial SD for \$65 M
- Canby SD for \$75 M
- Glendale SD for \$1.88 M
- Lane Community College for \$121.5 M

Four districts were unsuccessful in passing a bond, including Roseburg SD, Perrydale SD, Pendleton SD, and Harney County SD.

- Districts used different strategies to market their bonds during the evolving COVID-19 situation. St. Helens School District opted to push tax impacts out a year to give voters a “buffer year” before enacting the property tax increase. Canby School District heavily emphasized their bond’s relevance to COVID-19 challenges and used digital platforms for engagement.
- Jeremy advised the Committee to remain flexible with messaging moving forward. The Committee should consider addressing how bond will relate to technology/distance learning and other items impacted by COVID-19. Ensure the bond package is aligned to the community’s concerns.

### **Updated Bond Calendar**

- Jeremy presented an updated bond planning calendar for Newberg School District based on a November 2020 bond.
- A final poll will likely be conducted in early August. The deadline to file with the County is August 15<sup>th</sup>. Following this, the District will launch the bond engagement program corresponding with the start of the school year. It is likely that we will need to be flexible in our approach to community engagement (e.g. using digital platforms, etc.). The bond election date is November 3, 2020.

### **Recommended Bond Package**

- The Committee revisited the recommended bond package as of February 2020. The bond package amount was \$141,204,879. The Committee must now consider the potential impacts of COVID-19 on the bond package (e.g. prioritizing project needs or developing messaging to build community support).
- As an aside, a Committee member suggested changing the text “Science Lab Upgrades” to “Upgrade Science Laboratories at NHS.”

### **Potential Impacts of COVID-19 on School Facilities Needs / Community Support**

- Karina Ruiz and Joe Morelock discussed some of the COVID-related needs that Oregon districts will face in the near-term, including:
  - Limitations on group sizes / social distancing requirements.

- Maintaining designated points of entry and paths of travel within a school facility.
- HVAC upgrades for improved ventilation/filtration.
- Furniture and finishes that are easily sanitized.
- “No-touch” doors and fixtures.
- Need for technological equipment upgrades to support distance learning. Approximately \$1.1 M will be needed for technological devices over the next 24 months.
- Different scheduling options to reduce the number of students in the building at one time.
- Blended learning opportunities (e.g. hybrid of distance learning and in-person instruction).
- Achieving a balance between infection control and next generation learning practices.

### **Small Group Discussions**

The Committee was divided into several small groups for a “virtual” discussion of the following questions:

- How might COVID-19 potentially change the perspectives and priorities of Newberg voters in November?
- Should the District adjust the proposed bond package to address these issues?

After the breakouts, all Committee members reconvened and reported their discussion highlights (as summarized below).

#### Group 1

- While the group recognized that COVID-19 introduces new concerns, they were cautious about embracing costly capital solutions that may not be needed long-term (i.e. once a vaccine is available).
- Recent school closures have resulted in a greater awareness of all the other services and supports that schools provide to students and community members (e.g. nutrition, social/emotional learning, etc.). The sudden shift to distance learning and kids being at home 24/7 has also made people appreciate the importance of teachers. This may increase the community’s overall support for schools.
- Safety was a significant priority in the original bond package and should remain so.

#### Group 2

- Some group members expressed concern over whether the bond amount should be adjusted based on current economic conditions. Many community members may be facing long-term reductions in income. There is a general feeling of economic insecurity among the population. However, it is recognized that the District continues to have significant facilities needs that need to be addressed.
- Consider prioritizing health and human services impacts in our messaging. This could align well with COVID-related concerns. Consider defining resiliency within the context of positioning school

facilities as community resources during public emergencies.

- Explain how projects relate to current facilities needs under COVID-19. For example, Edwards Elementary School's cafeteria needs an upgrade – how many meals have we served at Edwards over the past two months?
- Consider keeping the overall categories the same but adjusting certain projects. For example, our maintenance project list might be different now (e.g. emphasizing HVAC upgrades, etc.).
- Ultimately, the group's preference was to keep the bond amount the same but consider adjusting some of the projects to better align with health/safety measures associated with COVID-19. For example, security improvements could also include sanitization upgrades.
- The group would like to see additional polling to determine if there has been a shift in community opinions following the start of the COVID-related closures, job losses, etc.

### Group 3

- The group was interested to know what percentage of Newberg voters has been impacted by unemployment under the COVID-19 closures.
- Will current political/social challenges impact voter turnout in November?
- Is this an opportunity to revisit traditional educational practices (e.g. with Dundee replacement)?
- Craft messaging to align with the community's concerns, needs and priorities.
- Think about flexibility/adaptability, ensuring buildings can respond to evolving conditions.

### Group 4

- It is important to keep the changing needs and perspectives of the Newberg voter population in mind when evaluating the bond package for November.
- The group talked about possibly reducing the bond amount or opting for a two-part bond. Is there a way to get creative with financing options while being sensitive to economic challenges faced by Newberg community members?

### Group 5

- Schools remain a vital community resource, even while closed. Approximately 88k meals were served districtwide during the month of May.
- Greater recognition of value of teachers now that kids are home all day.
- Long-term there will still be the need for public facilities / places where students and teachers can meet in-person.
- Look at the percentage breakdown of the different bond categories. Facility replacement and modernization is approximately 42% of the bond. Focus on what we are providing that students cannot get at home (e.g. CTE facilities). Modernization is part of our story.
- Safety and security must remain part of our messaging – passive as well as active (physical) safety/security measures. Some of these measures pertain to health/life safety.
- May need to reexamine which maintenance projects are prioritized in light of greater

filtration/HVAC needs In a post-COVID world.

### Committee Poll

- Karina conducted a “show of hands” poll to determine whether changes to the bond package were warranted.
  - Option 1: No change to bond projects; only adjust messaging. **Result = 12 votes**
  - Option 2: Make some adjustments to the bond categories. **Result = 7 votes**
- Karina asked the Committee what information they needed to help them move forward. Responses included:
  - **Updated polling information:** The Committee felt that it would be difficult to align the bond package and/or messaging with the community’s priorities without knowing how opinions have changed over the past few months. At the same time, public polling is expensive – there may be other ways to gauge community support (e.g. online surveys, etc.). It will be important to ensure that we are asking the right questions.
  - **The District’s Perspective on how COVID-19 will impact Facilities and Operations:** What is the District’s current thinking about how we might move forward with instruction (e.g. blended learning)? What are the short-term and long-term implications?

### Dundee Conceptual Plan

- The District has been considering various options for potentially constructing the new Dundee Elementary on a different site. Dundee’s current site is in a poor location in terms of its close proximity to 99W.
- It is important to note that there is not money in the school bond for land purchase or off-site improvements, etc. These costs would need to be funded through the sale (or land swap) of the current Dundee property.
- Feasibility reviews revealed that a site on the east side of 99E (just past the edge of town) seemed to be the best option for the District. The site is not currently surrounded by homes; it would not be a walkable campus (unlike the current school location). However, housing developments are planned for the future.
- Preliminary conceptual master plans were shared with the group.

### Next Steps

- A future Bond Development Committee meeting will be scheduled within the next month. The Steering Committee will assemble the requested information for the Bond Development Committee’s review.

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These meeting notes are a record. If there are any errors and/or omissions in the foregoing notes, please advise our office immediately; otherwise these notes will be considered correct and complete as written.

Submitted by

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