



# 2007 REFERENDUM FACT SHEET

## Fact Sheet #8: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

4/6/07

The April 17 \$40 million bond referendum would finance expansion, renovation and restructuring of our schools. Referendum Fact Sheet #8 responds to some of the questions heard at forums and coffees.

### **HOW WILL THIS PLAN AFFECT FIFTH AND SIXTH GRADE STUDENTS?**

Fifth and sixth graders are 10-11 years old, and need to be nurtured and protected in different ways than junior high students. Many of today's fifth graders have had broader experiences (in school and through family and extra-curricular activities) than the fifth grader of years ago, and are ready to advance beyond the elementary environment. Sixth graders have much in common with fifth graders, and the traditional junior high setting may not be an optimum fit for them. By grouping 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade children together, we can place them in an appropriate setting and provide academic, social and emotional programs geared to their needs. Their transition to the 7-8 junior high will be softer. In 5<sup>th</sup> grade, they'll be in a traditional, elementary-style classroom. In 6<sup>th</sup> grade, they'll be in a team setting where they will change classes, but in a more contained, younger environment than they are in today. The 5-6 intermediate school will be largely separate from the junior high, with separate entrances, schedules, bus routes and activities. It will have its own gym, and students will have more opportunities for non-competitive sports. Fifth grade will have access to science labs, which they do not have today. With a somewhat longer instructional day, there will be opportunities to provide an enhanced 5<sup>th</sup>-grade curriculum. Grades 7-8 also have academic and developmental affinities, and grouping them provides opportunities to offer developmentally appropriate programs and activities as we prepare them for success in high school. In creating this plan, the district has listened to input from parents and teachers, researched middle-level education, and investigated some of the many 5-8 Illinois schools to learn from their experiences. It has learned that a transition to a new grade structure is not easy, but those districts that have approached it with good planning, flexibility and commitment to meeting student and family needs are providing a highly successful educational experience.

### **HOW WAS THE PROJECT COST CALCULATED?**

The referendum asks for permission to sell \$40 million in bonds for construction and renovations. Approximately \$36 million is earmarked for Hadley, \$4 million among the elementary schools. The cost is comparable to those for recent similar school projects in towns such as Libertyville, Gurnee and Deerfield. Some things to remember:

- The cost is a projection and includes dollars for detailed architectural plans (since the Board did not authorize these in advance of voter approval of the project).
- Construction would begin in 2008 and go until August of 2010 for Hadley, 2011 for the elementaries; therefore, the estimates include a cost escalation figure based on market history and projections.
- The cost factors in everything needed to open a building, including furniture. (The referendum money will not be used for operational expenses, such as utilities and salaries.)
- School construction costs are not comparable to home construction costs. Schools must comply with the Illinois School Code, and must be built to take heavy use.

### **WHY IS THE COST MORE THAN WAS ORIGINALLY PROJECTED?**

In 2004, estimates were created for the options evaluated by the Facilities Task Force. These were in 2004 dollars and were intended to provide the Task Force a context for comparison among the options. The 2004 estimate for a stand-alone 5-6 school was \$24 million. In 2005, a \$35 million cost estimate for the Hadley concept was provided to the Board, factoring in cost escalation for bidding in 2008. The current cost of \$36 million includes additional contingencies, since the Board did not approve spending money on detailed plans in advance of voter approval.

### **WHAT IF MONEY IS LEFT OVER AFTER THE CONSTRUCTION IS DONE?**

The estimates are conservative so that the district can be assured it will be able to complete the project with the money available. The BOE has discussed what to do with any money that might remain after project completion, as well interest earnings on the bonds. Today's Board cannot bind a future Board as to what to do with those dollars, but it has said that it wants to put in place a community committee that would review the construction process and expenditures in order to be open and transparent about all dollars spent by the



district. Future Board decisions on what to do with any interest earnings or residual funds due to the project coming in under budget would be made after discussion or action in public.

### **HOW WILL TRAFFIC BE MANAGED AT HADLEY?**

The proposal makes improvements in vehicular flow around Hadley.

- Staggered arrival and dismissal times for the 5-6 wing and the 7-8 wing mean that traffic will be spread out over a bit longer time, but will be less intense over that time than it is today.
- Off-street bays for bus loading and car drop offs will help get vehicles off the street.
- Today, buses must head north on Glencoe. The new plan allows buses to turn either north or south once they exit the bus drop-off lane on Glencoe.
- The district is looking at ways to better manage traffic starting today, including more adult supervision during peak times, better signage, and working with authorities in Glen Ellyn and Wheaton to identify and manage traffic and safety issues in the surrounding neighborhood.

### **HOW WILL THE CONSTRUCTION AFFECT STORMWATER FLOW?**

Stormwater regulations are enforced by both the municipality and county. These regulations became more stringent after the 1986-7 floods in the county, and the project engineers are responsible for making sure that water does not runoff onto others' property any differently than it does today. The code lays out specifically how much water can drain at what speed on what land. The stormwater engineering is approved by village and county officials prior to groundbreaking. The Hadley plan incorporates underground stormwater detention.

### **WHAT IF THE REFERENDUM DOES NOT PASS?**

The district will still have a space problem. We will analyze the reasons for failure. In the meantime, the district will assess the limited options available to it, which may include: increase class sizes, move programs, assign new students/new developments to schools other than the one they would otherwise attend, add portables where possible, and adjust boundaries.

### **HOW MANY NEW STAFF MEMBERS WILL THE HADLEY EXPANSION REQUIRE?**

The operational cost projections are based on 10 new employees. Most of the teaching staff would come from redeploying existing staff. There would be about four new certified staff members, one additional administrator, and the rest would be support staff/custodians.

### **HOW DO WE KNOW ENROLLMENT WILL CONTINUE TO GROW?**

The district has had enrollment projections done by demographers who specialize in school projections; all project slow growth. In the late 1970s-mid-1080s, enrollment declined statewide as the baby boomers left the system. Our demographers tell us there is nothing to indicate such a decline would recur, since the baby boom circumstances do not exist today. Among the reasons for continued enrollment growth are: a desirable community that continues to attract young families, more large families, and subdivisions of large single-home parcels. In addition, empty nesters are selling their homes earlier than before, often to families with young children. In the past, since there were few "downsizing" options attractive to empty nesters, they often waited until they were in their 70s to sell the family home; now, with the construction of condos and townhouses in the area, they are selling their homes at younger ages, resulting in enrollment growth.

### **WHY CAN'T WE EXPAND ALL SCHOOLS AND KEEP THE SAME STRUCTURE?**

The district evaluated many alternatives to gain enough space, including expanding all the schools by going out, or up. To significantly enlarge the elementary schools would increase demands on the campus and its environs, and on core areas like libraries, gyms, bathrooms and parking. The elementary schools are already on small sites. Our architects advised us that adding a story is expensive, difficult to do in an operating school, and an inefficient use of space, due to the need for stairs and elevators to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

**HOW CAN I FIND OUT MORE?** Visit [www.d41.org](http://www.d41.org), direct questions or comments to [referendum@d41.org](mailto:referendum@d41.org).