

From: [Cohn, Gary](#)
To: [EPS.MailList](#)
Subject: Bond Proposal Renewed, PDC Rules & News Article Boo-Boo
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Attachments: [image003.png](#)

Dear Colleague:

Last night our school board reached consensus to place a bond measure on the ballot for April 22. Last week I shared information about the bond with you, and this morning I'm reaffirming most of those details and emphasizing three important topics:

1. Information about the bond
2. How state law and the Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) prescribes the care we must take when describing the bond to our public
3. The impact of incorrect media reports and together what we can do about them

ABOUT THE BOND – the results for bond AND levy

Last Tuesday's election results are certified. Voters approved the levy by a super majority of 60.74 percent, even though levies require only a simple majority for approval. 18,296 voters cast "yes" or "no" levy votes.

The capital facilities bond election results are 58.13 percent in favor. Capital bonds still require a 60 percent super majority in Washington State. The bond did not reach super majority status.

ABOUT THE BOND – what is next?

The school board's consensus last night was to place the same bond package before the public. They reached this consensus after three meetings totaling nearly nine hours of research, review and discussion.

The board will meet on Tuesday, March 4 at 5:30 p.m. in the board room at the CRC to approve the new resolution, which is necessary to place the bond on the April 22 ballot.

ABOUT THE BOND – what does it include?

The proposed bond will modernize the **Cascade High School science wing** into a STEM facility. It will rebuild and modernize **North Middle School** and **Woodside Elementary** – plus expand the number of classrooms for Woodside. Woodside Elementary is now the district's largest K-5 school with more than 700 students and more projected for the coming years.

Elementary school #18 will be included in the bond for the southern portion of the district. **Woodside, Cedar Wood, Silver Lake, Mill Creek and Emerson** elementary schools continue to be over capacity – with more students enrolled today and coming in the future than the schools were built to house. The bond will include dollars to build permanent classrooms for the long-term and some funding for portables and portable relocations for flexible and quick response to

student enrollment fluctuation in the short term.

North and Woodside's construction work will create entrance foyers with the same operational safety features that are now designed into our newly remodeled schools – for example, “air lock” entryways clearly visible to office staff – no more random entrances on sprawling, disconnected “California-style” campuses. Similar safety features will be added to **Hawthorne, Lowell, Madison, and Jackson elementary schools.**

New roofing, heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems and upgrades are planned across the district in this bond – as are further ADA improvements for disabled students, staff, and visitors.

Nineteen new elementary classrooms across the district will position us with space for full-day kindergarten and for reduced class sizes in kindergarten through third-grade promised by the state in 2018.

One of the most discussed parts of the bond was **Phase 1 of a new comprehensive high school** in the southern region of the district. For an estimated \$89 million, the district can add land to what it already owns in the southern portion of the district and build the first phase of a **fourth comprehensive high school.** Initially, the school should open with an estimated 750 students and then grow with more space added on to over time so it reaches our optimal enrollment of 1,500 students.

Because it is costly to operate a school larger than is necessary, Phase 1 will provide classroom space to **relieve overcrowding at Jackson High** quickly. There are now eight portables at Jackson. Housing the number of students likely to enroll at **Jackson High** between now and 2018 will require more portables on a campus already tightly packed with them. **Jackson High** today has more than 2,000 students – much bigger than we believe is an optimum learning environment for students.

Finally, \$20 million in educational technology funds from the bond, about eight percent of the total bond, will pay for the next phase of our network replacement and expansion, and computer replacements. The funding will maintain our ability to do that repair and replacement in phases to avoid spikes and dips in funding needs and keep our equipment as up-to-date as possible. This is particularly important with the state's move to implement the Smarter Balanced Assessment system, which is designed to be administered next school year totally on computers.

STATE LAW AND THE PUBLIC DISCLOSURE COMMISSION

Many residents, parents, and staff are interested in the district's bond proposal – both what was before voters on Feb. 11 and what MAY be before voters in the future. In addition, you may recall in my earlier email about staff pictures in Outlook and our new website, I noted that we still have considerable work to do to improve Web content and its attractiveness to

viewers.

In response to that public interest and ongoing website design effort, the new board members' desire to understand the election laws, and the suggestion that bond information be more easily accessible and visible, the communications department recently added creative Web graphics in connection with bond information.

Following the board's Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) training on Tuesday evening – and after a citizen inquiry to the PDC about the bond graphics, those graphics were removed from the website. What remains are basic facts about what was on the Feb. 11 bond. Following the advice of the PDC, we have also removed the "True/False Quiz" about local school taxes that the PDC believes borders on "marketing" of the bond issue.

The bond section of website is now stripped to meet the PDC's interpretation of its regulations. We are routinely asking the PDC for guidance and feedback to ensure we are in compliance with state law and will make adjustments per their recommendations. ***I encourage you to review the PDC guidelines for school districts which outline what school employees, school boards, PTAs, and district officials can and cannot do in connection with elections.*** That document was linked in the Wednesday [BoardNotes](#) which was emailed to staff. For your convenience, here is [that link](#) again.

MEDIA CORRECTIONS

This week's *Snohomish Tribune* article attributed inaccurate comments to district administrators. The article claimed administrators said teacher cutbacks would be necessary if we don't have bond funds. No administrator made those comments, nor would an administrator have made such claims. Cutbacks will be necessary if there are no bond funds, but I don't envision those cutbacks involving existing classroom teaching staff positions as the article claimed.

Capital activities and some technology functions are paid by capital bond funds. Approximately 40 classified staff members representing 23 FTE are now appropriately funded from capital dollars. Without those capital dollars, the district must make decisions about which of those responsibilities must continue and thus be funded from the local levy and state funds. For example, a certain level of technology maintenance and support is necessary to continue using classroom technology. The portion of that support paid for from bond funds would then need to come from the general fund. As you know, general funds are the same funds that pay for teachers and classrooms. This will make fewer funds available for classrooms, but should not cause current teacher cutbacks.

The *Tribune* article did not make that distinction and has caused some questions and concerns as a result – including accusations that the district is

using an invalid “scare” tactic to influence voters. That simply is not the truth.

In last week’s email I noted my dismay at hearing and seeing misinformation spread about the levy and bond – dismay because such misinformation is a disservice to you, to our public, and certainly to our future students. [Corrections to that misinformation](#) remain available on our website. *I strongly encourage you to review that information and to ask questions if you have any.* If you get questions you cannot answer, let us know. Those calls and [emails](#) are opportunities to share factual information and the district’s assessment of the impact of necessary and well-maintained facilities on the learning improvements of our students.

Thank you for your efforts to share accurate information about our schools, about the district’s capital facility’s needs, for helping with our ongoing voter registration efforts, and for what you do for each student whose life you touch each day.

Warm regards, and have a great weekend!

Gary



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