

# THREE FORKS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

School District No. J-24 . 212 East Neal . Three Forks, MT 59752

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## Three Forks Public Schools Bond Frequently Asked Question (FAQs)

### 1. Why is the school district doing this project?

- Originally built in 1952, our school building is in desperate need of safety and security improvements. The electrical, mechanical and plumbing systems are outdated and failing throughout most of the building. The school is also unsafe in its current design. To improve security and keep our students, teachers and staff safe, the entrances will be reconfigured so that all traffic will funnel through the front office during daytime hours, allowing for more controlled and safe access to the school. In addition to safety and security needs, we have also been assessing the need for additional classrooms to account for future growth.

### 2. What has the school district done so far?

- During the last two years, we have been talking with students, teachers, school staff and members of the community to get their input on building needs and design options. We have been working with an architect and a contractor to assess the building, its needs and design options. We are also working with a contractor to provide input on design, construction and phasing. The preferred (and most economical) option was selected and presented to the school board for final approval earlier this year.

### 3. What is next?

- We will be working with the community to provide information and answer any questions about the schools needs, the project and the process for the bond.
- A school bond election will be held on **May 8, 2018** via a mail ballot election. Ballots will be mailed out **April 18**.
- If approved, an architect with complete construction documents for the contractor or bid and build the project, resulting in an updated and improved school building.

### 4. I understand that our district is divided into two sub-districts? Can you explain this?

- This is correct. The District is divided into two districts: a High School District that serves grades 9-12 and an Elementary District that serves K-8, thus two separate bond elections. Each district would need to successfully pass the school bond for the project to move forward. If one bond passes and the other does not, the project could not be completed.

### 5. When is the bond election?

- The bond election is a mail ballot election and will be held on **May 8, 2018**. Ballots will be mailed out on April 18 and can be mailed back to the County Elections office or dropped off at the Three Forks Elementary School. Below are the available hours to drop off ballots.
  - Elementary School Office
    - Monday-Thursday 8:00-4:00pm
    - Friday 8:00-2:30pm
    - Election Day May 8<sup>th</sup> 8:00-8:00pm

### 6. How much is the District asking the taxpayers to approve?

- The District is asking for \$23,013,000.00.

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**7. The information shown by the District says the capacity of the renovated building and the proposed addition will be 1,088 students. Why are we building for such a high number of students if we are only at 700 today?**

- If the current enrollment trend continues, student enrollment will exceed 1,010 students by the 2022/2023 school year. The capacity shown on the information is the *building capacity*, which differs from the *functional capacity*, meaning we need to assume that every classroom at every grade level will not be equally full. Thus, there is some breathing room built in to handle the different enrollments at different grades.
- The demographic study the district completed highlighted the lack of available housing and infrastructure within Three Forks to support a school over the maximum amount planned of 1,088 students. If the infrastructure and housing were developed in 20-25 years, the district would need to reexamine the buildings to accommodate that potential future growth.

**8. How much will this bond cost me as a taxpayer?**

- The tax increase would be approximately \$262 dollars per year, or \$21.83 per month, for a home with assessed market values of \$100,000.00. Go to <https://threeforkswolves2.weebly.com/three-forks-school-district-pre-bond-program.html> for more bond info and to find your taxable value.
- As the district's overall taxable value increases, the amount that each property owner will be responsible for will decrease. 20 years ago, the tax base was at 7 million today the tax base for the district is at 9.8 million. This is an important piece of information that all voters need to take into consideration when voting.

**9. What happens if the bond does not pass?**

- Trailers will be purchased by the district to serve as portable temporary classrooms in two years to handle student growth and to address safety concerns at the existing school if the bond doesn't pass for both elementary and high school districts. Cost for each trailer is estimated at \$100,000 to purchase it, move it into place and install electrical, plumbing and heating. These trailers will take up space on campus and the issue of not having enough space will not be solved using these portables.
- The District can elect to pursue another mail ballot bond election in the future.

**10. I know that Three Forks is growing. As more people move in to the District, will my monthly taxes change or be reduced?**

- Yes, as more individuals, families, and businesses, move into the District, your monthly (and yearly) taxes will decrease. In 1999, the taxable value for the Three Forks district was 7 million. Today the taxable value is 9.8 million for the district. Therefore, over the 20-year period the district's taxable value has increased almost 3 million dollars creating less of an individual burden on each property owner. The same will hold true for the bond measure. As the taxable value, increases the cost associated for each property owner will decrease over the term of the bonds.

**11. \$23 million dollars seems like a lot of money per square feet of building. Why is it so expensive?**

- Renovating the existing 90,000-square-foot building, which needs ventilation, plumbing and electrical updates
- 48,870 square feet of new building additions
- Adding secure entrances
- Developing the rear bus and fire department access drives
- Updating underground site utilities
- Additional parking areas
- Expanding the kitchen and cafeteria to handle the increase in students
- Filling in the existing courtyards for learning spaces

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- Moving and expanding the playground areas
- Fixtures and equipment, construction testing and inspections, furniture, engineer and architect fees, commissioning, owner's representative fees, permitting and impact fees, flood plain costs, etc.

**12. I heard the school is in a flood plain? How is this affecting the design, construction and project costs?**

- The existing building is located in the flood plain. The project team has been working with the city, state and at the federal level to make sure all anticipated work complies with the requirements as economically as possible. Being in the floodplain and complying with the strict requirements is adding approximately 12-15% to the cost of the building when compared to if it were not in the flood plain.

**13. I heard there are many out-of-district students that are attending Three Forks Schools. What is the District doing to address these students?**

- There are currently 68 out of district students in grades K-12. This is 9.7% of the entire student population. The district needs the state ANB revenue that is associated with the out of district students to continue current programming and staffing. Currently, the out of district student revenue to the district is \$476,000 annually. Currently, out of district students do not create an environment where additional programs or staffing are needed. The current levels of staffing would still be needed regardless of the out of district students. If out of district students were not part of the student population in district students would see a cut in services and programs. The school board has begun the discussion of charging out of district students a tuition that would offset the cost of property taxes on a per student basis. This conversation with the school board will continue into the future. Ultimately, it is a board decision if tuition will be charged.
- 900 square feet is the recommended classroom size for students in grades K-12. There are many classrooms in the current facility K-12 that do not meet those guidelines. Through the comprehensive remodel of the existing facility the square footage classroom sizes will be adjusted. If the district closed enrollment and forced the out of district students to return to their home district the classroom square footage will still be deficient K-12 in the current facility. The district needs the state ANB revenue generated from out of district students to continue the current level of educational programming.

**14. Is the School District working with the Eagle Scout student who is trying to get the running track resurfaced?**

- Yes, the District is fully supporting Wyatt Golding in his endeavor to have the track paved and will help in any way that we can.

**15. What is the project timeline if the bond passes? When will the school be ready?**

- If the school bond passes, the architects will immediately begin the process of preparing the documents for the contractor to build the building additions and renovations. This process will take approximately 8 months to complete.
- Once the design is completed, the contractor will put the project out to bid and then begin construction. The contractor will need to phase the work to allow for school to remain in session while construction is happening (with student safety as the number one priority). It is anticipated that construction and phasing would be completed in August 2020 for the 2020/2021 school year.

**16. I have more questions. Where do I go to get answers or more information?**

- You can visit the District website at [www.tfschools.com](http://www.tfschools.com), or contact Superintendent Robert DoBell at 285-3224 x125, or [rdobell@threeforksk12.mt.us](mailto:rdobell@threeforksk12.mt.us).

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**17. I am trying to see how much the increase in taxes will be each month for the bond. I went to the District website and used the bond calculator but do not know the difference between taxable and appraised value.**

- Taxable value can be looked up at the following address:  
<http://svc.mt.gov/dor/property/prc#/search//200/1/all>. Take the taxable value of your property and enter it into the category on the spreadsheet that says taxable value. It will then generate the individual cost monthly as well as annually.

**18. What happens if there are any bond monies leftover after the project is complete?**

- If there is unspent tax revenue at the conclusion of the project, the surplus will go back to the taxpayers, reducing the yearly (and monthly) costs paid by taxpayers.

**19. Is the interest on the bonds included in the overall price?**

- The interest on the bonds cannot be calculated until after the passage of the bonds and the district works with our DA Davidson partners to coordinate the sale of the bonds. The district has been in contact with several local banks that have expressed interest in purchasing the bonds at a very low interest rate to help the community and taxpayers. What a great partnership!

**20. Why has the district decided not to demolish and re-build the high school?**

- The additional cost to demolish and rebuild the high school was \$3,221,244.81. The district believed that this added cost would make the total K-12 project remodel and expansion of new square footage too expensive for the community. Because of this, the district has elected to completely remodel the existing high school structure.

**21. The district is comprised of three schools. We have an elementary, middle, and high school. What is the primary focus of the additional elementary gym?**

- The additional elementary gym is designated as a physical education space for elementary students PE classes. Currently our elementary school students do not get PE time everyday. Their PE space is shared with two other schools. In adding an elementary gym for elementary PE this will give elementary students the ability to have PE more often during the week and will free up the shared gym space between the middle and high school. The entire K-12 student schedule will no longer be driven by shared gym space and time.

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