***Learn More About the Referendum***

***From: Dr. Lech, Superintendent***

As you are likely aware, the district pursued referendums in 2015 and 2018 to update and enhance aging facilities. In both instances, our community said that this was not the right plan at the right time. As a result, we have explored different opportunities to address our biggest concerns and believe the best remaining option exists with increasing our building fund. The JPS school board, on July 24, approved a special election on September 24, 2019 for the public to consider increasing building fund levy authority from 10 to 20 mills.

Currently, the district’s building fund allows JPS to levy for 10 mills only to support our facilities as governed by NDCC 57-15-17. Expansion of the building fund has been determined to be the most effective opportunity to address immediate issues, while also being a flexible option for any future facility planning to address long-term facility needs.

A Capital Projects Plan (CPP) was approved by the school board in 2016. The CPP outlined an average of $2.16 million per year in facility needs over a 10-year span across seven schedules: 1) Asbestos Abatement, 2) Building Repairs, 3) Sites, 4) Roofs, 5) ADA Remodeling, 6) Security and Safety, and 7) Equipment. $1.3 million, or 60%, of this annual $2.16 million in needs is attributed to Building Repairs. Similarly, the Roof schedule equates to an average annual cost of $560,000, or 26%, of these expenses. With the existing levy providing about $700,000 annually, the district is woefully short of the average annual costs to adequately update these facilities.

It is important to note that the district has been utilizing the existing levy beyond its maximum capacity. Since the approval of the CPP, the district has expended an average of $820,090 annually through the building fund with the vast majority of these expenses directly tied to the Capital Projects Plan. This average expense outpaces revenue from the building fund’s 10 mills and has resulted in spending down the interim balance of the building fund. While these projects have been necessary, spending more than we receive in revenue is not a sustainable model.

If the referendum was successful, the maximum impact of the levy authority for an additional 10 mills on a $100,000 home would provide a tax impact of $45 annually or $3.75 per month. This levy would be approved annually by the school board and the number of mills levied would be dependent upon facility needs in that tax year.

If you have any questions on the referendum, please contact Dr. Rob Lech at 701-252-1950, Robert.Lech@k12.nd.us, or make an appointment at Central Office for a visit.