

SMS BOND from page 1A

"The survey revealed the priority issues among those in the community include the proposal for a new middle school because of its current lack of classroom space and its current inability to meet the state's school building safety and fire codes," wrote the Siuslaw News.

The survey also concluded that 64 percent of the respondents gave the district a positive rating.

"The Siuslaw School District receives strong support from its community through a very high performance rating. ... This is a very high rating for a school district," the survey concluded.

In 1999, bond interest rates were at a 30-year low. It was projected that the bond would cost taxpayers \$1.22 per \$1,000 of assessed value.

The Siuslaw School Board Chairperson at the time, John Balcom, said, "It is a lot of money. It is not cheap to build schools these days.

"We need to fund schools, but that means asking taxpayers, some who are on a fixed income, some who are low income, to ante up and be a part of that. It is something we do in this country. We take responsibility for educating our kids, and it is expensive to do that."

To pass the bond, the Siuslaw School Board appointed four committees that met in 34 public meetings in two years, which included more than 50 community members, parents, students, board members and staff. The final public meetings were held in April and May before the election.

The bond passed on May 18, 1999, after 55 percent of voters turned out for the election. Those in favor numbered 2,920 compared to 1,879 against.

Steve Waddell, then the Siuslaw School District Superintendent, said, "I think there was a critical mass that understood what the problems were with the school. ... The district has always spent its money wisely and conservatively so that people knew that we weren't asking for money to be spent in a frivolous manner."

According to Blake, it was a 20-year bond that was initially for \$15,635,000; in total, with interest, it ended up being \$26,652,168, all paid by the taxpayers.

"This bond was designed to be a 'sunset bond,' so it started off really high and has taken a dip down," she said, with local taxpayers in the last year of the bond paid 90 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value for

the final piece of it.

"Common practice now designs the bonds to stay as consistent as possible through the life of the bond," Blake said, adding that the "sunset bond" method would not work for the community now. "To accomplish that with today's dollar would not be ideal for our taxpayers. They would take a pretty big hit at the top."

According to Blake, the rate has been around that 90 cents since she has worked at the district.

"Next year, when people get their taxes in November, that will come off. That's exciting for everybody that we made it through the period," she said.

The Siuslaw School District is continuing to look at ways to increase community awareness about the current state of the district's buildings, with the Facilities Advisory Committee beginning to plan a future bond centered around the replacement of Siuslaw High School.

"With the middle school bond, we've learned a lot, even for those of us who haven't been here through the whole thing," Blake said. "We've learned a lot about the project from start to finish, including all of the 'what to do right,' 'what to do better' kind of things to take into consideration for the future. We're excited about that."

The Facilities Advisory Committee will be working to increase awareness of the district's successes to residents in the Florence area.

Co-chair Aric Sneddon told the Siuslaw School Board last week, "We want to promote community recognition that the middle school bond was paid off, so we want to make sure that the district does make an effort to let the community know that it was paid for, and early."

"It was important for them that we celebrate this with the community," Blake said. "Our main message is just 'thank you' for saying yes to these kiddos. I can't imagine what we would be like in a position maintenance budget wise if we had one more older building."

For the 2019-20 school year, Siuslaw Middle School is projected to have up to 360 students, an increase from previous years.

"We usually have around 300, but because of our class sizes coming in from the elementary school, there's three in a row that are all hitting next year at the middle school," Blake said. "We've been able to absorb

that capacity. This year, we were able to add in general funds to add an aide at each grade level. We've hired an additional certified teacher for the staff, and so we've

cause the taxpayers paid their bills, and paid them timely, we were able to put it in specific funds specifically for debt service," Blake said. "It generated enough

into future projects to continue, maybe even some of the upgrades that are coming due as normal maintenance after 20 years."

She cautioned that Sius-

approved per state laws.

"Our goal is to continue to put that money right back into our properties. ... It doesn't go to salaries or general operations or anything like that. It would be dedicated to capital projects," she added.

In conclusion, "We want to thank the taxpayers for saying yes and seeing the project through," Blake said. "Now we have a wonderful building that we've been able to keep maintenance up on and everything, and it will continue to serve us well for quite a while."

For more information on the Siuslaw School District, visit siuslaw.k12.or.us.

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— **John Balcom,**
1999 Siuslaw School Board Chairperson

been able to manage all that with our current building and keep the flow of everything going. It's awesome."

The district has also been able to keep up with maintenance requirements at the middle school due to the newness of the systems.

"The bond reset the clock on that whole building in order for us to keep up on that routine maintenance," Blake said. "We are proud that we have been able to maintain as expected, and there have been no surprises or additional money that has needed to be spent on it that we didn't already plan for."

The district will now work with the State of Oregon to determine next steps.

"We are proud to say be-

interest to have just under \$650,000 left over after all bond proceeds have been paid. Our idea at the school district would be to roll that

law School District would have to work with the state to make sure there aren't further challenges, and any projects would have to be

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7th Annual Florence Area COMMUNITY-WIDE GARAGE SALE
September 13-15, 2019

How To Participate
The fee to participate is \$20. An ad for the Community Wide Garage Sale with a map of all participation sales will be published in the Siuslaw News on September 11th and 14th. Because of print deadlines, the registration deadline is 5pm Thursday August 30 2019.

You will also receive two official Community Wide Garage Sale signs as well as a tip sheet on how to have a great sale. Maps will be available in the Siuslaw News, online and at the Florence Visitors Center.

Please post signs only on private property with the owner's consent.
Posting signs on City utility poles, street or signal light poles, and median strips is against the municipal code.

Name _____ Phone _____
Address _____ Email _____
Subdivision name (if any) _____

Dates (CIRCLE): Friday 9/13 Saturday 9/14 Sunday 9/15
Times: _____ _____ _____

15-word description: (Date, times and address are included. Addition words over 15 are \$0.50 each.)

Add'l Words _____

Bring form and payment to 148 Maple St in Historic Old Town or mail to Siuslaw News PO Box 10, Florence, OR 97439
Call 541-902-3526 | florencechamber.com
Deadline is August 30th at 5pm to be included on the map.

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