

Giving Spirit



JENNIFER ROBERTS/for the Itemizer-Observer

The Focus Pocus 4-H Club helped collect and pack boxes for Operation Christmas Child on Friday. The group packed approximately 50 boxes. All boxes received a toothbrush, soap and included items for kids, including dolls, games, gloves and more. Operation Christmas Child collects boxes for children around the world who do not have gifts for Christmas. For more information about 4-H: 503-623-8395.

Falls City gym bond fails again

Voters in the school district reject funding for new facility for a second time

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

FALLS CITY — Falls City School District's second attempt at passing a \$2 million bond to build a multipurpose gym at its elementary school site suffered another narrow loss.

The bond failed by 11 votes in May. This time the margin was 32 — 297 "yes" votes to 329 voting "no."

"I'm disappointed because the need has not gone away," said Superintendent Jack Thompson. "I hope we go out for it again."

District officials said a new facility was needed to give elementary students a



Measure 27-120

Yes — 297, 47 percent
No — 329, 52 percent

ty to make more fresh food, more room to work, and updated appliances, including a dishwasher.

The failure means the district lost out on a state matching grant that would have given \$2 million more to Falls City to build the facility, which would have served as a gym and kitchen. Falls City also was in line for the grant in the first attempt to get the bond passed.

"People may still be at the point of not feeling they can

afford that property tax," Thompson said.

The bond would have charged property owners \$1.30 per \$1,000 of assessed value over 20 years.

Falls City School Board met on Tuesday after press time, and Thompson said the election results would be a topic of conversation.

He said he would ask if the board wanted him to conduct a survey of the community to find the reason people voted "no" on the measure.

"I haven't done one this time to see why," Thompson said. "I will talk to the board (Tuesday) to see if they want me to do one."

Central voters say no to school bond

By Emily Mentzer
The Itemizer-Observer

INDEPENDENCE/MONMOUTH — Voters said "no" on Nov. 8 to Central School District's request for a \$26 million facilities bond, 4,636 to 4,164 (52 to 47 percent).

Business Manager Cec Koontz said that district officials have yet to formulate a plan b, partly because the specific conditions, including low interest rates, may not repeat themselves.

"The opportunity to ensure the matching grant from the state would be available is another thing that drove our timing," Koontz said. "To take advantage of those things again, we'd have to go back out in May."

With the search for a superintendent and a high school principal this spring, Koontz said it's not feasible to attempt to talk to the community about a bond at that time.

Koontz said that had voters approved the bond, Central schools would have received a \$4 million grant from the state to help build the new gyms and classrooms — something officials couldn't promise during the election, but knew was possible.

"We were first on the waiting list," Koontz said. "Only two of the six who were guaranteed funding passed their bonds."

Overall, it was a pretty negative election for school bonds, Koontz said, noting that bonds passed on the east side of the mountains, but many on the west side failed.

"It was tough," Koontz said. "Measure 97 was a very divisive and difficult issue, when you're thinking about schools and school funding."

She said that even if Measure 97 had passed, it would not have addressed the facility needs at Central schools.

"We couldn't have used Measure 97 for capital items," Koontz said. "That's our job to explain those differences. Maybe we didn't do that."

Koontz and Superintendent Buzz Brazeau were at an Oregon School Boards Association conference in Portland throughout the weekend. Koontz said they hadn't been able to reconvene the bond exploration committee yet to debrief from the election results.

She said the members of the bond exploration committee did a great job driving the process.

"We had some great parents who were active and engaged, but apparently we didn't get the story told," she said. "So we'll see what the exploration committee is interested in."

With the state budget shaping up to be tight, Koontz said there's no guarantee the grant program will be reinstated for the next biennium. Another factor is the increase in contributions to the public employee retirement system, which the district — among other government bodies — will struggle to meet.

"We're going to have to do something," Koontz said. "None of these projects can wait. Talmadge (Middle School) has another bubble of kids coming next year, so we're going to have to look at some things, maybe use the construction excise taxes we have or capital improvement funds, but it won't do any of the gyms. It won't do the cafeteria, and it won't replace the portables at IES."



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