

Proud Hermistonian supports bond

I am writing on behalf of "Vote Yes for Kids" school bond on the upcoming election. I am writing as a concerned citizen, parent and business leader. My family moved to Hermiston 6 years ago. We were immediately impressed by the warm reception of this inclusive community and the obvious value this city placed on education. Our Realtor made a point to show us all the new schools.

Based on our address, when our children began school they weren't enrolled in one of the newer facilities, but instead the oldest, Rocky Heights. I can tell you that the quality of their education thus far has been wonderful based on the tremendous teaching staff and the obvious intention the administration of that school puts into character development along with school work. However, I can also say our first and third grader have been negatively impacted by the infrastructure of their aging school. Crowding in the cafeteria means they often have less than 20 minutes to eat their lunch. Our daughter tells us often that she didn't get to finish eating. Our third-grade son shares a modular classroom with his classmates. It's evident his teacher is making the most of the limited space, but more modular classrooms are not the answer.

I encourage your readers to consider the long-term impact of this proposed bond. Our school enrollment continues to grow as our thriving city grows. Even though this community invested heavily in education in the recent past, it's not enough for the future, or even the present.

I am proud to call myself a Hermistonian and proud to be raising our family here. I'm proud of the fine educators who take such great care of our children, and ask that we provide the necessary support to help them!

JOSH BURNS
HERMISTON

The needs is now for new schools

I support the Hermiston School District's bond levy to build/replace three elementary schools, add to the high school and

update Sandstone Middle school.

I was a member of the School Districts Facility Master Planning Committee and later a member of the Citizen's Review Committee. We spent months and months reviewing reports, data, and opinions from experts before making recommendations to the Hermiston School Board. Therefore, I fully understand the immediate need of our School District and how this bond levy will positively affect our community.

There has been much said by others about why this levy is needed; the District's large student enrollment growth, fixing student safety issues, and need to repair/update aging infrastructure. Hermiston also gets a large positive economic impact, not only during the time of building but a lasting benefit from use of these facilities through activities in the future. Any combination of these would likely justify what is being requested but when all are combined, from my prospective, the decision to support this bond levy becomes easy.

My support is not only based on the above, but what I learned from my 90-year-old mother in 2008 when the Hermiston School District last requested funding. I asked if she was supportive and with no hesitation, she said yes. She went on to say others had supported and provided facilities used by her kids and now it was her turn to support those who had children in school.

She obviously was on a fixed income but clearly understood her obligation as well as the value of having adequate facilities to support education. While all of my children have long since graduated from the Hermiston High School, I like and agree with what my mother said.

Let's be honest, a 100-plus million dollar bond is a lot of money, but understand if we do not approve this bond next month, there still will be an immediate need that continues to grow. Either way we will have to provide these schools. Will it be today or tomorrow? The longer we put this off the more expensive these projects become and the further behind we get

GUEST COMMENT

Bond addresses growth, security and aging facilities

On May 16, 2017 voters will be asked to consider a \$104 million bond for the Hermiston School District. The bond will address three challenges that the district is facing while trying to provide a premier education for our students. The issues are enrollment growth, safety and security and an aging infrastructure. The current predicted growth trends indicate that the district's population will increase 24 percent in the next seven years. If new construction and renovation does not happen, by 2023, one fifth of the students would be served in temporary, modular classrooms. The funding for these would have to come out of the general fund, taking away the ability to hire additional staff, cutting current programs and putting pressure on a very limited maintenance budget.

The safety concerns at Rocky Heights and Highland Hills are realities that need to be addressed. In 2015, the Hermiston Police Department's independent safety audit found these two schools to be inadequate to meet current safety standards due to their design, age and lack of life-safety alert systems. Replacing both of these schools would be the most prudent and cost effective measure.

The third challenge

has to do with aging infrastructure at the two elementary schools and at Sandstone Middle School. Roofs, mechanical units, and utility mechanisms need to be replaced.

The projects to be completed, if the bond passes, would be; replace Rocky Heights and Highland Hills at their present sites, build a new elementary school on district owned property on Theater Lane, expand Hermiston High school, make improvements on the district owned fairground property and address deferred maintenance and obsolete, failing heating and cooling systems.

The board is very much aware that the bond amount seems quite large. The estimated cost being 90 cents per \$1,000 of taxable value. After much study, discussion and consideration, the board unanimously voted to place the bond on the May ballot. Hermiston has always been a community that strongly supports its young people and by voting for the bond this support will continue for students in the future.

Your consideration to vote in favor of the bond is greatly appreciated.

KAREN J. SHERMAN
HERMISTON SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD CHAIR

HERMISTON

LETTERS POLICY

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in providing the facilities needed for Oregon's second fastest growing school district.

Therefore, for these reasons and more, I will vote yes to support the bond for the Hermiston

School District and hope that you will also join me in doing so.

PHIL HAMM
HERMISTON

Should Parks department run center?

I wonder at the City Council's choice for Park and Rec department as managers of the conference center. Take a look at Newport Park and Shockman Field if you want to see the quality of their work. Both parks were once beautiful ball fields. If a department can't maintain what they have, why would we think they can do a good job with something new?

MIKE MEHREN
HERMISTON

Student urges bond passage

I am writing in support of the school bond which is to be voted on, May 16, 2017 for Hermiston. As a student that has been through every level of my education in the Hermiston School District, I have seen and experienced many problems within the facilities. The majority of these problems will be addressed with the passing of the 2017 school bond.

I began my schooling at Highland Hills Elementary School in kindergarten. I remember my parents telling me about their experiences at the same elementary school, and though it did not occur to me then, Highland Hills was obviously aging. Providing enough space for all the students was a problem. There was more than one space used as a classroom that wasn't intended to be. These spaces had to transform into rooms since the regular classrooms and modulars were already at full capacity. Highland Hills also does not have a separate spot designated as a cafeteria so our gym doubled as the lunch room. As I have returned to HHES many times since I graduated from the fifth grade, I have seen the mechanical, structural, and safety issues that need to be addressed.

When I finished the fifth grade, I moved to Sandstone Middle School. There, for three years, I formed friend-

ships, created bonds with the teachers in Team Jefferson, and struggled to close the stall doors in the girls' bathrooms because most of the locks were broken. Alongside my peers, I dealt with the inconsistent heating and air conditioning systems, which seemed to be under maintenance more often than not. There were many times that we felt sorry for the maintenance crew who were constantly fighting the same problems over and over.

Finally, I made my way to Hermiston High School and am still seeing many of the same problems that the school faced when I was a freshman. The most prominent of these issues is the overcrowding that is threatening to get worse. Hermiston High School was originally built to accommodate fewer students than we currently house. With our school district projecting to gain another 1,100 students in the next seven years, it is near impossible to add more students to the classrooms, hallways, and public spaces. The three modulars recently added are not built to last the wear and tear of thousands of students for very long and they were placed over parking spaces that were already dwindling in numbers. More students and teachers are being forced to park on streets and in neighborhoods surrounding the high school because every space is taken by the time they arrive. Traffic within the parking lots is a safety risk because there is a lack of order and space for cars to be able to enter and exit. It is causing back-ups in road traffic and cars parked on the street make it unsafe for drivers and pedestrians who cannot see oncoming cars. Lastly, we have countless issues with our electrical, plumbing, and technology systems. An extra thousand students in our schools that are getting enough wear as they are will be a risk to our education and safety.

Though my career as a student in the Hermiston School District will be ending in the next two years and I will soon become a taxpayer that will share the expense, I urge voters to vote "YES" on the 2017 School Bond.

REED MIDDLETON
JUNIOR, HERMISTON HIGH SCHOOL



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