

Answers to Questions from WVS Bond Survey

Q. Is the cost of furnishings, lab equipment, landscaping, etc included in the bond amount?

A. Yes

Q. Can we look at having our MS students attend in the Kalispell School District?

A. This is a very complex question with multiple levels to the answer. Short answer is they do not have room in their current MS to be able to add West Valley students. KMS is the largest MS in the state. There are other variables to this happening, or not happening. KSD would have to build another MS in order to make this happen and then the WVSD would have to agree to this along with the KSD. Teachers unions would have to get involved, as you would have seniority issues to deal in combining staffs. Even if this was possible you would be at least 5 years away from this happening, if not longer.

Q. Can we charge developers an impact fee when they build these large developments?

A. No. There is nothing in MCA that states developers are responsible for schools when they build these developments.

Q. I think school boundary lines need to be re-assessed?

A. Much of our taxable value comes from the fact we have boundary lines that include the big box stores on the west side of hwy 93. Changing boundary lines we would lose those businesses and therefore our taxable value would decrease greatly, which would decrease our bonding capacity. Changing boundary lines has to be agreed upon by both school districts, which rarely if ever happens.

Q. We need to stop allowing out-of district students into West Valley School.

A. We have stopped allowing open enrollment kids. Currently we have about 45 students who are open enrollment, some of them have been here for their entire school career and we have grandfathered them in. In the big picture these students are not causing the overcrowding, as they are dispersed out amongst the grade levels. We will not be allowing open enrollment anytime soon, as we will be getting a steady influx of new students moving into the district.

Q. Are there grants available for building costs and can there be fundraising for additional facilities, like they did at FVCC? What is the status of the previous bond?

A. To my knowledge there aren't any grants that would cover the cost of the new building and fundraising takes on a different look at WV, than it would for FVCC. We still owe about 4.5 million on the current bond, which was a 20 year bond that was initiated in 2013.

Q. Why isn't the county responsible for some of the cost of the new school?

- A. There is nothing in Montana Law that requires the county, state, or city to be responsible for the cost of building schools. Montana is all about local control and this is just another part of that. This is true of almost every state.

Q. Find a more economical way to build the school.

- A. Unfortunately the cost of materials, labor and land has gone up significantly in the past few years. As an example, the MS we built 8 years ago for around 6 million dollars, would now cost double that to build. If we do a smaller project it will only cover the school district growth for 5-7 years and then something else would have to be done to accommodate the growth. This would cost more than the current plan to build the new MS.

Q. There are no houses valued at \$100K in the valley.

- A. By law we have to show the tax increase on a 100K and 200K home value. We know there are no homes in that price range anywhere in the valley. We used the median home price of 348K to show how taxes would be increased by \$48.00 per month. We understand that many of the homes values are over the 500K amount and will put out the cost for houses ranging from 300K to 700K so homeowners have a better understanding of how much their taxes will be increased.

Q. If there are so many people moving into the WV area and each household is getting taxed, why do education taxes continue to increase for each household?

- A. When the value of your house increases, so do the taxes by the same percentage. Many states have a cap limit on how much your taxes can go up each year, usually no more than 3%, no matter how much your home value increases. There is legislation going forward for the same type of format for Montana. Contact your local elected leaders and let them know you support this.

Q. We need to quit spending money foolishly, so we can afford these things in the future.

- A. Every year the school district puts together a budget for approval by the elected school board in August. The vast majority of the money we receive goes to salaries and benefits, which is the way it is in every district in America. We have not passed a levy in West Valley since 2007 and have been able to not survive, but thrive by hiring great staff! This is mainly due to the fact we increase our Average Number Belonging (ANB) every year. While it helps support that overall budget, it doesn't pay for new buildings due to overcrowding with the new students we are getting in our district.

Q. People think the new home owners' taxes should cover the cost of the new building?

A. The taxes paid for school districts cover the daily operation of the schools. New facilities are not covered in the property taxes homeowners pay. That is why bonds have to be voted on for new facilities.

Q. Where is the land for the new building?

A. The land to be purchased is off of 4 Mile Drive and Stillwater road, close to the DNRC building. Close to several housing projects going in that area.

Q. Does the new school come with additional safety features and improved drop off and pick up area?

A. Yes, there will be substantial upgrades for safety in the new and current building.

Q. Concern about having to drop kids off at two separate schools not near each other?

A. There would be accommodations made in the schedule for the schools to start at different times. Shuttle buses from one of the schools to the other would also be an option.

Q. What is the breakdown of money being sent at one location compared to the other?

A. The new building would get about 24 million and the existing building would get around 3.3 million for upgrades.

Q. Can West Valley have its own high school?

A. K-8 districts once they reach 1000 students can decide if they want to become their own high school district. This was passed in legislation about 6 years ago and two K-8 districts have become their own HS district since then. It does mean passing a bond for a HS. East Helena and Lockwood in Billings are the 2 K-8 districts who have done this

Other Comments from the Survey

- Awesome! Do it!!
- Good and thorough work by the school board! Thank you for your service!
- Market this via social media aggressively
- Great planning
- Make sure the middle school has a music room
- I strongly support this venture to build a new middle school. While I dislike the idea of the elementary school becoming a mega school like Muldown in Whitefish, I feel building a new middle school is a good first step. As a community member I value our students' ability to go to middle school in our district and then right on the GHS. I feel our middle schoolers deserve a modern building that has more opportunities for learning.
- How can I help? I know we have to get the word out, so put me to work!
 - A. We will be sending out information on ways the bond committee can help in the near future. The best way is just word of mouth.
- I feel a 20 year bond is ideal. It will still result in new families picking up part of the cost, but will be paid down sooner than a longer period in case additional bonding is needed before the 20 year expiration. A new middle school is needed in the WVSD for many reasons...and should happen as quickly as possible.
- It will be best if one is built and the values of the existing WVS continues into it as well. In the district children should always be first. The area is growing too fast and students' education will begin to suffer from being overcrowded.
- How can parents help get this passed?
 - A. There will be a bond committee and I will be sending out information very soon about how you can help.
- There is a huge need for new facilities in the WVSD. The sooner we can pass the bond, the more cost effective it will be and most importantly beneficial for the kids and families in West Valley.
- Keeping class sizes small for all students is our top priority and concern! We greatly support what needs to be done with the bond to accomplish the best student outcomes!
- I would like a high school as an option.
- Looks great! It's time we do this.