

Yes, to Both

EPS bond issues pass, 66 percent and 69 percent

Article: Enid News & Eagle

Staff Writer: Sally Asher

Headline: Wednesday, February 10, 2016

Enid residents voted overwhelmingly to approve the almost \$93 million bond issues to improve Enid Public Schools facilities, safety and security, transportation, technology, fine arts and athletics.

Proposition No. 1 asked voters whether to approve \$90.23 million to repair, remodel and build new district facilities, increase safety and security measures on campuses, improve technology infrastructure and provide one mobile device per student, and add fine arts and athletic facilities.

Voters approved Proposition No. 1 by a vote of 3,225-1,686, or 65.7 percent in favor.

Proposition No 2. asked voters whether or not to approve nearly \$2.57 million to upgrade the district's transportation fleet.

Voters approved Proposition No. 2 by a vote of 3,382-1,548, or 68.6 percent in favor.

EPS Superintendent Darrell Floyd said the passage of the bond is a boon for Enid.

"This is a great day for Enid Public Schools and the community of Enid, and for the students," he said. "We are just very grateful for the community for supporting this plan, and also to the thousands of residents who helped develop and pass it."

By law, the transportation portion of the issue had to be listed as a separate proposition on the ballot. School bond issues require a 60 percent super-majority to pass.

The district will purchase charter buses, 66-passenger buses, 24-passenger buses, IT vehicles, vans, suburbans and driver's education vehicles.

EPS Transportation Director Jim Gelsthorpe said some of the district's buses are 19 years old.

"We are going to replace 21 of the buses over a three-year period because of the way the money comes in," he said. "Most buses are replaced not because they have high milage but because of wear and tear."

EPS Chief Financial Officer Karl White said planning to implement the proposal will begin immediately.

“We will immediately organize for the supervision of the construction, and then we will take proposals from architects for the projects, and go out to bid,” he said. “We hope to be ready to get contracts on construction this summer. We hope to be contracting and getting ready to kick off breaking ground by late summer.”

EPS Communications Director Amber Graham Fitzgerald said the districts hopes to have the work completed within three years, but technology implementation will happen in less time.

The district wants to have one mobile device per child, and implementation will begin this fall, she said.

“We plan to be fully implemented the following year,” she said. “The timeline, which will include training on technology integration, is very important because we want it to be smooth and positive for everyone involved.”

The bond will provide classroom additions, renovations to existing school buildings, including additional storage for students’ belongings, new flooring, repaving parking lots, upgrading electrical systems, signage, new windows, gymnasium repairs and renovations, playground equipment upgrades, and new plumbing and bathroom fixtures.

A portion of the bond will go toward a fine arts facility at Enid High School, which includes rooms for band, choral, orchestra, dance and music technology, a black box theater, a video and sports broadcasting studio, and 15 new classrooms; a competition gym with locker rooms, a wrestling room, and seating for 2,500; and renovations to the Margaret Buvinger Music Building to create eight additional classrooms.

The athletic portion of the bond proposal originally was more extensive, including an indoor training facility, but the community called for more money to go toward academic facilities, Fitzgerald said.

“The community expressed a strong interest in reducing the size of the athletic projects in the overall school bond package,” she said. “The board listened to their suggestions and reduced athletics by 35 percent, instead investing more in classroom learning space.”