

PRESS RELEASE: At a Special Board meeting on February 13, the [Lopez Island School](#) Board voted unanimously to place a bond measure for a major school renovation project on the April 23 ballot for voter consideration.

If approved by the required 60% of Lopez voters, the campus-wide renovation, will be a major commitment by the community in support of its schools. The proposed \$15.5 million project, represents an increase of \$68/\$1000 dollar of assessed property valuation, or \$272 per year for a median priced house on Lopez.

The proposed renovations will bring the Lopez and Decatur campuses up to modern standards and will eliminate the need for the District to seek further capital improvement bonds for the next 25-30 years.

The bond measure would bring local school taxes to a total of approximately \$644 per year for a median Lopez home owner, which is in the lower half of total local school taxes for average priced houses in Washington.

A team of engineers and architects, led by Tacoma based TCF Architects, worked with the District to develop a detailed analysis of current campus needs, from which they then developed recommendations for the most cost effective and sustainable solutions.

Based on a facility assessment conducted two years ago, the school infrastructure alone has a need for more than \$6 million in replacements, repairs, and upgrades.

The elementary program is growing and an increase in enrollment is projected. There is a need to upgrade classroom and other spaces to better support the elementary and secondary programs, as well as to support indoor elementary PE, technology, the District's farm-to-school program (including renovation of the kitchen to possibly rent out as a commercial kitchen off-hours), it's fine and performing arts programs, and its athletics program.

The School Board also sought opportunities to be better stewards of the environment by utilizing rain catchment for irrigation, and conserving energy (over 30 years save over \$750,000 in energy bills).

The installation of solar panels and LED lighting will further enhance energy savings. Life safety systems will be improved by installing fire suppression sprinklers in the gym and science wing, bringing the electrical systems up to code, integrating communication and fire alarm systems campus-wide, and adding appropriate and sensible security upgrades.

The recommendations from the architects and engineers, in concert with the School Board's analysis, pointed to campus-wide renovation as the most prudent approach, and was deemed more economically viable than building an entirely new school (\$35 million) or simply fixing basic infrastructure (\$6.7 million).

It is projected that the lives of the existing buildings will be extended for an additional 25-30 years.

"To be able to validate and build upon the rich historical foundations of the Lopez School is compelling", stated Board Chair John Holding.

In determining to seek voter approval in April, the Board considered today's historically low interest rates, currently 2.3%, as well as a projected excellent construction bidding climate and other factors. District bond consultants estimate that a 1% increase in interest rates would cost taxpayers an additional \$2.4 million, and they advised that interest rates may begin to climb in the next few months.

The Board determined there was a need to address the identified needs as soon as possible.

The District is seeking opportunities to offset projected costs of the proposed project by applying for grants. It has currently applied for over \$1 million of assistance. The District conducted an intensive selection process to select TCF Architects. They are well-known in school construction and have earned very high respect for their work and their proven ability to complete projects

well, on time, and on budget.

The District and TCF are using one of the foremost estimating firms in the state (The Robinson Company) to provide realistic and conservative cost estimates, including contingencies for the unexpected items that often surface in renovation projects. The District expressed confidence that they have selected the right team.

There will be several public forums to present information and answer questions, including a public meeting on March 14 at 6:30 at the Lopez Center.

Community members may stop by or call the District Office (**468-2202**), or email Bill Evans bevans@lopez.k12.wa.us, or John Holding, Board chair, jholding@lopez.k12.wa.us with any questions or comments.