

R-7 Citizens' Advisory Committee presents recommendation for no-tax-increase bond issue and Prop C 20-cent waiver tax levy continuance
Ballot issues designed to address growth and student needs

Members of the Lee's Summit R-7 School District Citizens' Advisory Committee presented a recommendation designed to address school district growth, financial and facility needs at the Nov. 15 R-7 Board of Education meeting. The Citizens' Advisory Committee has been studying school district needs since last February in preparation for this recommendation to the Board of Education.

The committee's recommendation consisted of a \$54 million no-tax-increase bond issue and a no-tax-increase Proposition C 20-cent waiver tax levy continuance, both recommended for the April 8, 2008, ballot. Citizens' Advisory Committee chairperson Kent Kirby and members Allan Gray, Chris Storms and Cheryl Ward presented the recommendation during the Nov. 15 Board of Education meeting, and Board members are expected to make a decision on these issues on Dec. 13.

The R-7 School District is one of the state's fastest growing, gaining 7,900 students for an 87-percent increase since 1990. Average annual growth over the last 17 years is approximately 465 students, and total district enrollment in kindergarten through 12th grade this year is 16,975.

The no-tax-increase bond issue features new facilities to handle growth and student needs, additional classrooms to allow the district to implement an all-day kindergarten program, improvements to existing facilities to address school growth and parity issues, technology enhancements and new school buses.

No-tax-increase bond issue components include:

- A new elementary school, located in the southeast portion of the school district, to handle ongoing R-7 growth.
- Construction of 29 kindergarten and support classrooms throughout the school district to provide for implementation of an all-day kindergarten program by fall 2009.
- Construction of two classrooms at Great Beginnings Early Education Center to address growth needs.
- An addition to Mason Elementary School to help meet growth needs, including four regular classrooms, improvements to existing classrooms and offices, restroom/door upgrades and a new cafeteria/kitchen space.
- First phase of a remodeling project at Hazel Grove Elementary to update existing spaces for classrooms, offices, special-education services, art and music.

- Improvements at Lee's Summit High School, including storage, classroom areas, an editing studio for broadcast journalism classes and improvements in the family and consumer sciences area.
- An addition to Lee's Summit North High School to include an industrial-technology lab, band storage room, docking area/mechanical space and hallways.
- Planned addition of 18 classrooms at Lee's Summit West High School to increase the school's student capacity by 357 students to 2,086 students.
- Marching band uniform replacement at both LSHS and LSNHS along with additional and replacement of specific high-cost musical instruments.
- Remodeling of the district's recently vacated administrative office, located in downtown Lee's Summit, to provide a special-education day-treatment facility for students in first grade through high school. These students are currently being served outside of the district through contracted programs.
- Technology enhancements to help improve student achievement through instructional and emerging technology.
- Construction of a self-supporting swim/dive aquatics center to serve high school competitive swim/dive programs with additional opportunities for middle-school intramurals, physical-education and health instruction, elementary swim lessons and community-related aquatics activities. The facility would be located at the Pleasant Lea Elementary/Pleasant Lea Middle School campus.
- New school buses and parking lot upgrades at the R-7 Transportation Department site.
- Capital improvements at a number of R-7 schools, including repairs and improvements such as heating/ventilation/air-conditioning, handicapped accessibility, playgrounds, roofing, paving, flooring and painting.

The no-tax-increase Proposition C 20-cent waiver tax levy continuance was recommended after a study of the district's budget and financial needs. Proposition C is a statewide tax approved by Missouri voters in the early 1980s. This 1-cent sales tax was dedicated to public school districts, and local districts were required to roll back their levy in an amount based on how much money each district received from ½ cents of the Prop C revenue.

R-7 voters approved the 20-cent Prop C waiver in 1996, allowing the district to waive a portion (20 cents) of the total Proposition C waiver. Without voter approval, this no-tax-increase 20-cent waiver would sunset during the 2009-10 school year, resulting in revenue losses for R-7 schools. Due to existing revenue needs, the Citizens' Advisory Committee recommended that the issue be placed on the April ballot without a sunset provision.

Voter approval of the no-tax-increase bond issue requires a four-sevenths majority, and the Prop C waiver requires a simple majority for approval.

The Lee's Summit R-7 Citizens' Advisory Committee has served as an advisory council organized to make recommendations to the Board of Education since its establishment in 1952. The group currently has approximately 40 members, including parents and non-parents as well as representatives from the R-7 Board of Education, school district staff, Lee's Summit Educational Foundation, Economic Development Council, Chamber of Commerce, PTA, Lee's Summit Ministerial Alliance, higher education, health care and small business.