

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION

Informational presentation on the Bellevue School District's proposed ballot measure

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DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL**INFORMATION
ONLY**

Bellevue School District Superintendent Ivan Duran and Deputy Superintendent for Finance Melissa deVita will provide information on the District's proposed ballot measure which will be on the February 11 ballot. No formal action is requested from Council. Tonight's briefing is informational and an opportunity for Council to learn about the Bellevue School District's proposed levy, ask questions and provide feedback.

RECOMMENDATION

N/A

BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS

The Bellevue School District (BSD) has experienced growth rates not seen since the 1960's when Bellevue was a developing community. The BSD serves approximately 21,000 students in 29 schools. The district serves an increasingly diverse group of students with more than 95 different first languages and representing 124 different countries of birth.

The BSD adopted a new five-year strategic plan in 2018 providing a guide and blueprint for its educational community that will help ensure students continue to excel. This plan affirms the district's commitment that each Bellevue student—no matter their race, ability, language background, religion, national origin, immigration status, or sexual orientation—will receive an exemplary education and reach their full potential. To accomplish these goals, the district employs approximately 2,300 employees, 1,400 of whom are teachers. Over 400 teachers are National Board certified, the highest professional certification a pre-kindergarten through high school teacher can earn, and 85 percent hold a master's degree.

Strategic Plan

The strategic plan is intended to bring cohesion to the efforts of the Bellevue School Board of Directors, the BSD team, and the community, aligning all toward strengthening investments in student success.

The plan includes six priority areas: high-quality instruction, student well-being, exceptional staff, family and community, culture and climate, and organizational alignment. Through the strategic planning process, Bellevue's students, parents, staff and community expressed the expectation that the BSD continue to offer a world-class education program and continue the momentum that it has generated over the past five years. This includes:

- Expanding opportunities for students to be college and career ready, particularly in the areas of

science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) and Career/Technical Education (CTE).

- Increasing student participation in Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses with the percentage of passing exam scores exceeding the national average.
- Introducing new pre-kindergarten – 12 programs and strategies that provide students with critical social-emotional skills and safe and positive learning environments.
- Providing innovative training for instructional and support staff on effective practices to meet the needs of English language learners that builds on rigorous dual language learning opportunities.
- Promoting a preschool program that provides academic and social skills to prepare students for future success in positive and interactive environments.
- Committing to an instructional focus that is inclusive of students from diverse backgrounds, languages and special needs.
- Expanding athletics, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math), humanities, music, art and other activities for all students.

Proposed Capital Bond Ballot Measure

At its November 19 meeting, the Bellevue School Board adopted a resolution placing a capital bond measure on the February 11, 2020 election ballot. The proposed bond replaces the BSD's prior bond, approved by voters in 2014, and funds the next phase of the district's capital plan. The proposed funding measure was informed by a needs assessment undertaken by the district's Growth and Planning Community Advisory Group which considered building age, past and projected enrollment growth, and prioritized identified facility projects. The proposed levy would fund the following capital projects:

- Rebuild three aging schools with the highest facility needs (Big Picture, International and Jing Mei Schools) and replace with modern and safe buildings for students and faculty.
- Add capacity to reduce crowding through additions and renovations at Newport and Interlake High Schools.
- Improve physical safety and security through the addition of security vestibules in eight schools that do not have them. Bollards (safety posts) would also be added at the front entrance of 19 schools that do not have them.
- Rebuild aging education service centers, investing in more efficient facilities and creating community meeting spaces.
- Designate funding for future purchase of property for additional school locations.

School districts rely on voter-approved funding measures to cover costs that are not fully funded by the state, such as construction costs. The bond measure requires a 60 percent affirmative vote for passage. If approved, the bond measure would generate a total of \$675 million, which the district would pay back over 20 years. A Bellevue property owner within the BSD currently pays \$2.43 per \$1,000 Assessed Value (AV) for local school property taxes. If approved by voters, the local tax rate for the BSD would increase by \$0.03 per \$1,000 AV. A Bellevue homeowner within the district with a median home valued at \$936,000 would pay an additional \$28.08 per year more than the existing annual amount of \$2,275.

Impact of the *McCleary* Decision on K-12 school funding

As part of the approach to the *McCleary* decision, the state legislature reduced the amount of money that could be collected from local property taxes by approximately 33 percent to a maximum of \$2,500 per student for the BSD for general operating expenses (Maintenance and Operations Levy or Enrichment Levy). In addition, the legislature established the School Employee Benefits Board which changed the way school districts provide employee benefits. The School Employee Benefits Board now administers health and other employee benefits for all districts in the state, rather than districts individually negotiating these benefits.

Subsequent to the original *McCleary* approach, the legislature raised the local levy limits for other districts including Seattle which was able to take advantage of a provision for districts serving more than 40,000 students. However, the BSD levy limit was not impacted by the changes to local levy limit formulas and remained flat at \$2,500 per student. While the state did provide additional funding for the district, much of it comes with added requirements. In addition, the legislature did not fully fund the impact of requiring districts to purchase employee benefits through the state. The biggest funding shortfalls from the state are in the areas of special education, employee benefits, and student well-being and mental health.

POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS

Policy Impact

If approved by voters, the bond measure would increase the local property tax rate for schools by \$0.03 per \$1,000 AV to a total of \$2.46 per \$1,000 AV. A Bellevue homeowner within the district with a median home valued at \$936,000 would pay an additional \$28.08 per year.

Fiscal Impact

There is no direct fiscal impact to the City.

OPTIONS

N/A

ATTACHMENTS & AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS

N/A

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY

N/A