

## Local Schools



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# Puxico Schools Release Info on Taxes, Funding, and Bond Issue

FEBRUARY 04TH 2020 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Puxico, MO - Superintendent of Puxico R-VIII School District, Cindy Crabb, released the following information.

"We are reviewing the first round of our survey results and visiting with our community members," commented Crabb. "Several good points and questions have been shared. Here are a few answers to the most frequently asked questions."

### **1. What is our current local tax rate?**

We have tax monies going into two separate funds for the Puxico R-8 School District. Our current tax rate is \$2.75 for the general or operating fund (also known as fund 1). The current tax levy for our debt service fund (also know as fund 3) is \$ .79.

### **2. Where does our school get funding from?**

There are 4 primary sources: Local, County, State, and Federal.

We receive about 35% of our total revenues from the local tax source (this amount includes monies from both of our tax levies mentioned in question #1, local city sales tax, etc.). Miscellaneous taxes from state assessed railroad and utilities, fines, escheats, etc. come from a source called the county tax and this amount accounts for about 4% of our revenues. We receive about 51% of our total revenues from the State of Missouri and state budget allowances. The final revenue source is our federal revenues. Our federal

funds are required to be utilized for certain programs and grants. These revenues account for about 10% of our total budget.

### **3. How is the Fund 1, the operating fund, used?**

This fund pays for a portion of all operating expenses throughout the year. These funds pay for everything that a child comes into contact with (and more) in each school day. Utilities, staff salaries, transportation, textbooks, classroom materials, etc., are all paid from these monies. Out of our local revenue mentioned above in question #2, 78% of the 35% goes to this fund. The remainder (22%) of the 35% goes to the debt service fund.

### **4. For what purpose can the debt service funds be used?**

This amount is only used to pay off the bond issue for the high school building project. This amount was approved by a ballot and went into effect in the 2006-2007 school year. This tax levy could expire in 2024.

### **5. Does the school board plan to raise my taxes without a ballot issue or voter approval?**

The board has the legal authority to adjust the debt service rate, but this has never occurred since the existing bond issue was passed in for the high school. However, they do not have the authority to extend the bond issue without approval from the voters.

### **6. Why are we talking about another project before the bond issue is finished with the high school project from 2006?**

We have some significant decisions to make about the maintenance and upkeep of the elementary building. The reason we are discussing it now, is because the construction of the elementary school began in the mid-1950s. We need the community's help in deciding if we want to invest in the current structure, or if it is time to look at a building project and incorporate solutions to other concerns (safety, accessibility, etc.) that have been identified by the staff, students, and community members as well. IF the voters decide a new school is more feasible or desirable, it can be a lengthy process. The sooner we can get started on it, the more planning that can go into it. The reason it can be discussed now-the high school, in thanks to good decisions on the part of the school board, is going to be paid off early with a huge savings to taxpayers.

### **7. What is the process going forward concerning the facility planning phase for our district?**

A committee will review the survey results and determine some options for our facility plan. We expect the primary focus to be the safety, security, and upkeep of the elementary, but there are other points of interest that have been identified. We will work with a performance contracting group to provide options and estimated costs to our community on identified projects. More community surveys will be conducted. Informational meetings will be scheduled. Final options will be narrowed down, and again more input will be gathered. Depending on the identified projects and costs, it will then be decided if a bond issue should be on an election ballot.

**8. Does the school board and school district plan to have a ballot issue in during the April election?**

In a simple answer - No. There is absolutely no intention of placing the bond issue on the April ballot. The school district and school board are both committed to gathering information and getting a clear direction from the community on how the district should proceed, and there is no way this could be accomplished by that time. The earliest possible option for a ballot to be presented to voters would be in August 2020.

**9. When will there be a ballot issue?**

If the community supports a project that requires a ballot issue, it could appear on a ballot in August 2020. If more work and development on the plan is needed, and a ballot issue is desired by the community, it can appear anytime after that.

**10. I have heard a lot about raising the debt service tax levy, why are they discussing it?**

As school districts work with financial planners and advisors, they discuss possible opportunities for upcoming facility planning. It is their job to advise districts and school boards of opportunities that will be coming up in the next few years so they can plan accordingly. As you may have noticed, in our local area school districts, every 5-10 years there is a major project going on. A school district cannot rebuild itself in its entirety at one time. Therefore, having a viable facility plan is crucial. Identifying projects, funding sources, and timelines help with this process. Our district, its school board, and its community members are nearing a phase that allows for an opportunity to look at possible projects to improve our facilities. Thinking about long-range planning and how we keep up is essential. The amount of the needed tax levy will depend on the decision of the size of any project.

**11. Can you compare the high school building project with what it would take for a complete elementary replacement project?**

The new high school building opened in 2008, and was primarily designed, for 220-240 high school students. It contains 11 classrooms, 2 computer/technology classrooms, 2 science classrooms (with labs), an art room, FACS classroom, a computer lab, 4 student bathrooms, building offices, a workroom, and small tech office. The agricultural classroom/shop, gym, band room, and alternative education facilities are not directly attached to the main high school building.

The current elementary provides educational services to 380-400 students. It contains 22 classrooms, nurse's office, space for Speech/OT/PT, music classroom, P.E. facility, art classroom, computer lab, 4 intervention classrooms (title services), restrooms, playgrounds, and offices. Additionally, it has been suggested to incorporate a permanent preschool space in the long-range plan.

LAST UPDATED ON FEBRUARY 04TH 2020 BY DEE LOFLIN

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