

# Re-funded school bond would help upgrade facilities

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In the midst of its budget unknowns and a lack of funding on the state level, the Sheridan School District will seek voter approval to use additional funds it has garnered from an existing bond.

Last year, the district sold the bond it received in 2003 to build Faulconer-Chapman School at a lower interest rate than it had previously been paying. Because of the sale, the bond rate will drop.

The district plans to ask the voters to allow them to keep the rate at its existing level for the rest of the bond time period, and use the extra money to complete several outstanding projects around the district. If the voters reject the request, the rate they pay on their property taxes will go down by about \$1 per \$1000 of assessed property value.

"It would be like if you re-financed a home and captured the equity and used it to remodel the house," Grauer said.

In the house comparison, the buyer would take out a second loan on the house, in a larger amount than what is still owed, pay off the rest of the first loan and pocket the excess from the new loan. The district would like to do the same with the excess money accrued through the sale of the bond.

The change will not make the bond any longer and will not cost the voters any more. Their current property tax levy will remain the same until the original expiration date of the bond.

But the "re-funding" will be accomplished by asking voters to approve a new bond that perfectly fills the gap in rate that will be left when the current bond rate goes down as a result of last year's sale of the bond, said Carol Samuels, senior vice president of Seattle-Northwest Securities Corporation. Samuels gave a presentation to the bond committee at this month's board meeting.

At the time of the sale, the district instantly saved \$500,000 but continues to save money.

"It's [the bond] already been sold, it's already generating interest," Grauer said.

During her report to the bond committee, Samuels told them that what they plan is perfectly feasible and informed them about the limitations of what they can spend the money on.

"If it's something you should be doing as regular maintenance of the building you shouldn't be putting it on the bond," she said.

She gave the example of painting a room because of the current color, which would be regarded as maintenance, versus painting the same room as part of finalizing a re-model, which would be eligible for bond funds.

Using information from staff, parent and student surveys and their own understanding of the district's needs, the committee outlined two preliminary tiers of priorities for use of the bond money. The most important priorities are:

- Replacement of Sheridan High School classroom heating systems
- Safety and access (handicap) doors for both SHS and FCS
- A remodel of the SHS restrooms and a plumbing upgrade
- Window replacement at SHS and a replacement of the heating system in the old gym at FCS

The secondary list of priorities, which will be addressed if there is money left over are:

- Ventilation, dust control and storage in the shop classroom at SHS
- Replacement of the stadium roof at SHS
- Replacement of the field lighting
- A new athletic track, which would include a jump pad, pole vault and javelin pit
- New asphalt and garbage/recycling pad for FCS