

January 18, 2008

Dear Parents:

On December 21, Ferndale School Board approved two resolutions to submit to the voters. The first is a Capital Bond Issue that addresses the capital needs of North Bellingham Elementary School, Custer Elementary School and safety issues associated with most of our schools. The second issue to be submitted to the voters is a six year technology levy that would provide funds for technology updates, infrastructure, replacement of old computers, enhancement of classroom technology and provision of instructional support for classroom teachers. The goal of the technology levy is to bring our district technology to the average of five comparable districts. We are currently last in most every category.

Earlier this year a citizens/staff committee was formed to review our capital needs, safety needs and technology program needs. Committee members had the opportunity to visit North Bellingham Elementary and Custer Elementary Schools and spent a great deal of time studying, discussing and prioritizing the various topics.

The committee heard reports from staff and consultants. Additionally, the district hired Northwest Educational Service District 189 to study and recommend changes to our district-wide technology program. That report is due in mid-January and the results of that study, along with recommendations, will be shared with the school board, staff, committee members and community.

After reviewing all of the materials, the committee on December 21 recommended that the board authorize and submit a capital bond issue totaling \$21 million to the voters in March. They also recommended that a six year technology levy totaling \$4.2 million which would be collected in \$700,000 increments over six years. The technology levy would address current and anticipated needs in order to bring our district to the average of five comparable districts.

Technology Comparison of Ferndale to Five Similar School Districts

	Number of Students Per Standards-Based Computer <sup>1</sup>	Number of Students Per Non-Standard Computers <sup>2</sup>	Number of Students Per Computers located in a library	Number of Students Per Lab Computer <sup>3</sup>	Percent of Classrooms with Document Cameras	Percent of Classrooms with Interactive Whiteboards	Percent of Classrooms with LCD Projectors	Number of Computers Per IT* staff Member	Number of IT* staff
Average of five districts	4.56	10.43	51.63	14.06	62.56%	5.93%	70.80%	277.9	5.9
Ferndale	9.6	4.8	59.5	9.1	8.92%	0%	20.70%	390.0	4.0
Notes	Lower= Better	Higher= Better	Lower= Better	Lower= Better	Higher= Better	Higher= Better	Higher= Better	Lower= Better	

\*District Technology Staff

Capital Construction: The \$21 million Capital Construction Bond Issue would do the following: 1) Replace an aging Custer Elementary School with a new two-story elementary school. The Committee felt that any further money spent on updating Custer was a very unwise investment of tax dollars, 2) Replace the seismically unsafe 1938 North Bellingham Elementary School building. The 1969 and 1979 buildings at North Bellingham would receive seismic upgrades, new thermal windows, heating systems, carpet and paint, and new roofs. 3) Replace an aging districtwide phone system which is beyond repair. Also, provide safety components of: the ability for schools to lock down in case there is a threat or an intruder, public access to school buildings would be improved, public address systems upgraded or replaced, emergency generators added to the district's central office and Ferndale High School to maintain communication during power outages, emergency generator at Beach Elementary School on Lummi Island to ensure ongoing communication and provide electricity for heating and lighting to the building. The bond issue will not increase the tax rate.

<sup>1</sup> Number of computers is calculated from standards-based systems instructional computers

<sup>2</sup> Number of computers is calculated from non-standards-based instructional computers

<sup>3</sup> Lab computers include laptops used in *mobile labs*

Estimated Total Tax Rate 2008	\$3.95
Estimated Total Tax Rate 2009	\$3.95
Estimated Total Tax Rate 2010-2024	\$3.94
Estimated Total Tax Rate 2025	\$3.56

In a building condition evaluation which is a standardized, detailed scoring of every physical component of Custer Elementary and North Bellingham Elementary schools, it was determined that Custer Elementary rated a score of 40.4 and the 1938 North Bellingham Elementary building received a score of 38.3. According to the state, a score which falls below 40 indicates that the buildings are rated as poor and it is recommended that the building be replaced with a new one. North Bellingham Elementary School's other buildings received an adjusted score of 82 which is rated as should only be modernized. That is what the school district plans to do.

In the next newsletter to you I will address the capital construction needs and costs for North Bellingham and Custer elementary schools. If you need additional information, you can obtain that by visiting our website at [www.ferndale.wednet.edu](http://www.ferndale.wednet.edu) or by calling the people listed below. You can also receive information from the principal of the school that your child attends.

Sincerely,



Dr. Roger L. Lehnert  
Superintendent

RLL:tb

Mark Deebach	383-9203
Aaron Kombol	383-9215
Dan Coward	380-4614
Andrew McLaurin	383-0347
Lee Anne Riddle	384-9051
John Hruby	366-5059
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