

Cunningham-West Kingman County USD No. 332

School Improvement Bond Election

April 5, 2022

Great things happen every day in Cunningham-West Kingman County Schools. We have great kids, great teachers and staff, and great parents and patrons that support our schools and educational extra-curricular programs. What could be better are our facilities. Our Elementary and Gym facilities are considered to have some age but are generally in good shape. Our Middle/ High School building is more than 100 years old and has significant physical and educational challenges. Our Shop building (metals and woodworking) is inadequately small for our programs. The upper grade structure and shop have served our District and community well but teaching and learning has changed dramatically since they were constructed. Time and much hard use by hundreds of active young people takes a toll. After decades of wear and tear, systems deteriorate. Safety and security of students and staff must be a priority. Our buildings need upgrades and expansion to continue as quality assets for our students and community.

The Cunningham-West Kingman County Board of Education has made school facilities a priority in recent years. A Facility Steering Committee was formed with staff, parents and patrons. They toured our existing buildings and met multiple times over the last 18 months to evaluate our schools and educational programs and prioritize possible improvements to be considered by the Board. The Board of Education retained the services of an architect, a construction management firm, and a financial consultant to evaluate challenges, possible solutions, and the cost and tax impact of a capital improvement plan. The Steering Committee considered renovation options as compared to new construction and determined that new was a better investment. After much study, thought, and input from many sources, the Board recently adopted a resolution scheduling a bond issue election for April 5, 2022.



The election requests voter authority to issue no more than \$13,245,000 in general obligation bonds to finance the proposed capital improvements. The Board feels that now is an opportune time to consider needed capital improvements with near historically low interest rates. On Tuesday, April 5th, USD 332 voters will decide if now is the right time to make needed improvements to District buildings for improved education, safety and security, and the future of our school district.

FACILITY AND EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES

- In USD 332, we have the opportunity and responsibility to provide education to about 210 students each year.
- Unusual for rural districts, our enrollment has increased by more than 15% in recent years.
- The original Middle/ High School building in Cunningham is more than 100 years old.
- Education and teaching have changed dramatically since this building was designed and constructed.
- With its age and much hard use, it has significant physical and educational challenges.
- Limited classroom space requires some teachers to share, limiting their effectiveness.
- This building also lacks adequate classrooms and support spaces for today and tomorrow's curriculum.
- Science and FACS (Family & Consumer Science) classrooms are very outdated and inadequate.
- The library/media center located in the basement is inadequate for today's education.
- Mechanical and Electrical systems are outdated, inadequate, and inefficient.
- Old systems requiring constant maintenance rob dollars from educational needs.
- Restrooms and other support areas are in need of major renovation or replacement.
- The separated shop building is considered too small and inadequate for this vital part of our curriculum.
- With agriculture being the core of our local economy, our schools need a dedicated area for students to focus on agriculture and vocational education.
- The separate location of metals and woodworking deters some students from these courses.
- The shop building lacks space for projects and storage.
- Existing storm shelter areas are considered poor and are not handicap accessible.
- The storm shelter in the basement of the Elementary has windows that could spell disaster in violent storm and also has no restroom facilities.
- The Elementary School is considered structurally adequate but needs some interior upgrades.
- Our USD 332 schools need improvements to prepare our young people for the future.

Our Children... Our Future... Our Responsibility!

PROPOSED BOND ISSUE SOLUTIONS

- Demolish the existing 1917 2-story old high school and the gymnasium lobby area to make room for a portion of the planned new construction.
- The existing gymnasium would be retained.
- Construct, equip and furnish an area to infill the demolished old high school location to create new Vo-Ag Shop, woods shop, Vo-tech classroom, Family and Consumer Science Lab, office suite, and a Media Center to also function as a FEMA standard storm shelter.
- Construct, equip and furnish an addition at the front of the retained gymnasium to create a new lobby, restrooms, and concession area.
- Construct, equip and furnish a new wing for Middle/High School education with classrooms and support spaces including a new science lab.
- Total new construction of approximately 34,000 square feet of modern, functional space.
- Make improvements and upgrades to the interior of the Elementary School.
- Install HVAC (Heating, Ventilation & Air-Conditioning) at the gymnasium.
- Provide a fire suppression system at the office/music/cafeteria area of the Elementary building.
- Install improvements for enhanced security at building entrances.
- The outdated separate shop building would be repurposed for maintenance and storage needs.
- Improvements to make both teaching and learning more effective in our schools.
- Improvements to make our schools safer and more secure for students and staff.
- Improvements to help us attract and keep quality teachers, staff and students in USD 332.
- Improvements to make our school system and community more attractive to families and business considering relocation.

FINANCE—AN ADVANTAGEOUS TIME

1. \$13,245,000 Bond Issue to pay the approximately \$12,853,000 Project Costs plus Costs of Issuance and interest during construction (Capitalized Interest).
2. Interest rates, estimated at 2.75%, are near historically low levels.
3. Cunningham-West Kingman County USD 332 has a growing tax base as the District's assessed valuation has grown by more than \$9.5 million (16.46%) in the last decade. To be conservative, we have assumed growth of only 1.0% through 2031 and only ½ of 1% thereafter.
4. The District's Equalized Assessed Valuation (including motor vehicles) is \$69,991,696.
5. USD 332 has no existing bonded indebtedness at this time.
6. The USD 332 total mill rate of 36.486 is the lowest in the area and one of the lowest in Kansas.
7. The proposed bonds are estimated to require a levy of 9.9 mills.
8. With bond approval, the District's total mill rate will still be the 6th lowest in the area.
9. A mill is \$1 of tax on each \$1,000 of assessed valuation of property in the District.
10. The estimated tax impact on a \$75,000 home in the District is \$7.12 per month.
11. The estimated tax impact on 160 Acres of Dryland farm is 41 cents per Acre per year.
12. The estimated tax impact on 160 Acres of Irrigated farm is \$1.34 per Acre per year.

IT'S AN IMPORTANT DECISION

In a community and area like Cunningham-West Kingman County, our public schools are arguably our most important infrastructure asset. The education and preparation of young people and future citizens is always an important priority and investment. Building challenges will not solve themselves and will only become more expensive to solve with delay. The April bond issue proposal was developed with much input from many sources. The USD 332 Board of Education believes the capital improvement plan is both responsible and affordable.



The USD 332 Board of Education has been good stewards of your education dollars. The District has the lowest mill levy in the area. With a healthy tax base and very low interest rates, a major capital improvement program can be accomplished and our total mill rate will still be one of the lowest in our area. Interest rates will not stay low forever.

Parents and patrons are encouraged to register, if needed, to be eligible to vote on this important question for the future of education in USD 332 Schools. Please get registered, get the facts, and please vote on or before April 5, 2022. Now is the time to consider an investment for continued quality education in Cunningham-West Kingman County Schools.

Keep Improving District Schools