

# **Phase VI / Smithville R-II School District Master Building Plan Questions and Responses**

*On*

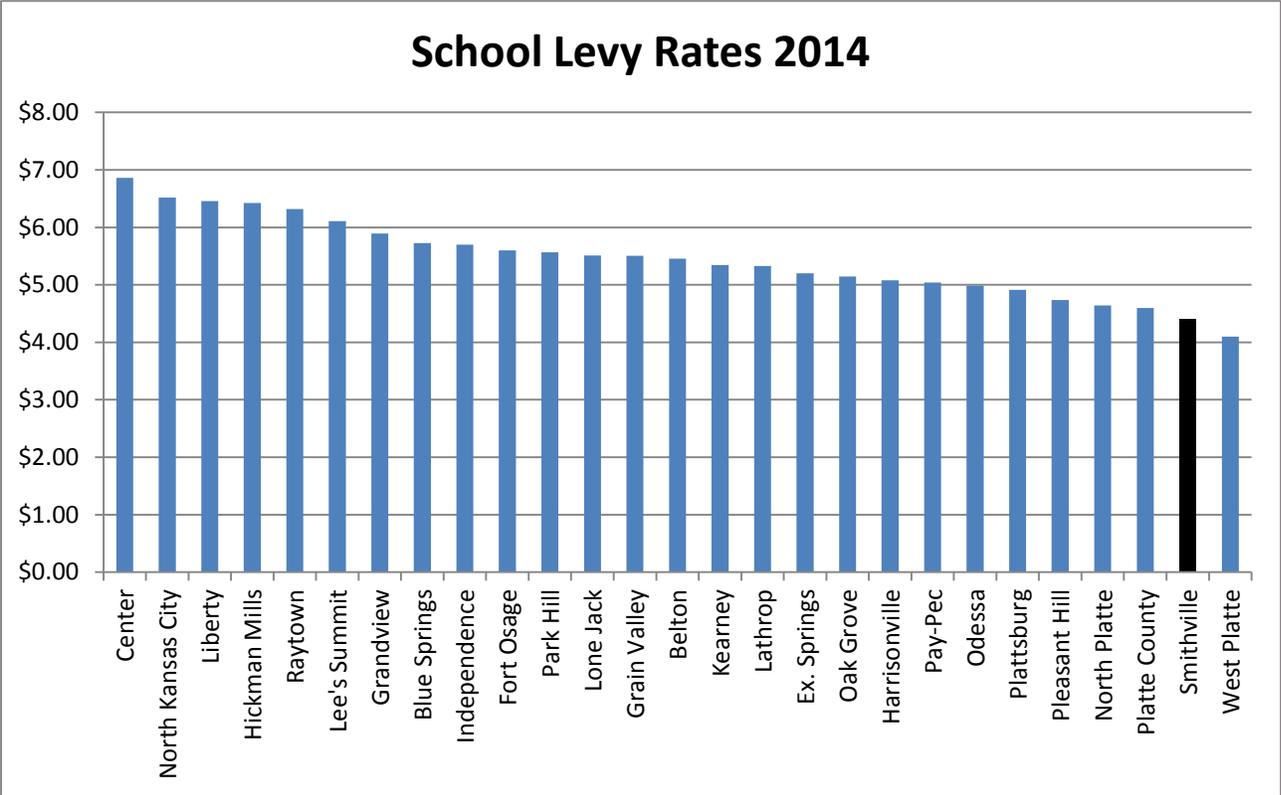
*November 4, 2014*

## **The Issue**

The Smithville R-II School District will be asking voters to consider a \$0.79 levy increase on Tuesday, November 4, 2014, for the purpose of constructing, improving, expanding, equipping, operating and maintaining school facilities, including a third elementary, security and entrance improvement at all district buildings, roofing replacements and telecommunication upgrades. If approved, the levy increase will “end” (sun-set) in 25 years.

The improvements are needed to accommodate district growth and ensure high academic standards are maintained. Currently all buildings are near and or exceeding recommended occupancies.

Even with the additional \$0.79 investment, the Smithville R-II School District will continue to have one of the lowest tax rates in the greater Kansas City Area. The Smithville R-II Board of Education has not increased the tax levy rate since 1997.



1. **Why do we need this levy increase?** This levy increase will help the district expand its facilities to address growth in our student population. The district is currently using space for instruction that was originally designed for storage and utilizing mobile class rooms to meet student needs.
  
2. **How much has the student population grown?** For the past ten years, K-12 enrollment has totaled the following:
 

2005-06	2070	6.21% increase
2006-07	2202	6.38% increase
2007-08	2188	0.64% decrease
2008-09	2263	3.43% increase
2009-10	2386	5.44% increase
2010-11	2372	0.59% decrease
2011-12	2408	1.52% increase
2012-13	2448	1.66% increase
2013-14	2491	1.76% increase
2014-15	2515	.99% increase

During this ten year period, the Smithville R-II School District K-12 enrollment averaged an increase of 2.862% for each year, increasing a total of 445 students or 21.5%.

The district uses a process of considering past enrollment trends to predict future grade level, building level, and district enrollments. This enrollment projection process has been very accurate in predicting future enrollment trends. The following K-12 enrollment totals are projected for the next nine years:

2015-16	2594	3.12% increase
2016-17	2626	1.25% increase
2017-18	2696	2.66% increase
2018-19	2753	2.11% increase
2019-20	2847	3.42% increase
2020-21	2926	2.78% increase
2021-22	3022	3.27% increase
2022-23	3102	2.67% increase
2023-24	3191	2.87% increase

During this upcoming nine year period, the Smithville R-II School District K-12 enrollment is projected to increase an average of 2.68% per year, increasing by a projected total of 597 students or 26.8%.

#### Estimated Building Capacities of Current Facilities

9-12 High School	852	Projected to Exceed Capacity in 2015-16
6-8 Middle School	632	Projected to Exceed Capacity in 2019-20
3-5 Upper Elementary	616	Projected to Exceed Capacity in 2019-20
<b>K-2 Primary Elementary</b>	<b>540</b>	<b>Exceeded Capacity in 2014-15</b>
<b>Early Childhood</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>Exceeded Capacity in 2012-13</b>

3. **What is the 2014-2015 enrollment by building?** At the start of the 2014-2015 school year, the Primary Elementary enrollment was:

- 545 in grades K-2 which includes 10 sections of Kindergarten students, 9 sections of 1<sup>st</sup> grade students, and 8 sections of 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students.
- The Upper Elementary totaled 558 in grades 3-5 which includes 8 sections of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students, 8 sections of 4<sup>th</sup> grade students, and 8 sections of 5<sup>th</sup> grade students.
- The Middle School enrollment totaled 592.
- The High School totaled 822 students.

Currently, the largest class in the district are the juniors with 248 students and the smallest class is the seniors with 171 students.

4. **What projects are included in the April 2014 Ballot Issue?** The plan is to construct an additional K-6 elementary, to improve the secure entrances to the High School, Middle School, Upper Elementary, and Primary Elementary, remodel the office and front entrance to the Primary Elementary to improve building security and efficiency, re-design the bus loop/parent drop-off and pick-up at the Primary Elementary to improve efficiency (other improvements to PES?), district roofing projects, and upgrade district communication systems.

5. **How were the projects and amounts for each project determined?** The Board of Education analyzed existing enrollment, studied district demographics (including enrollment projections) engaged stakeholders (parents, community leaders, students, and staff members) in creating a long range Master Building Plan which was approved by the Board of Education in November 2011, to address present needs and the needs of the future. The cost of each Phase VI project was determined through collaboration of the district architects, engineers, and construction management firm with the assistance of district officials. The preliminary Phase VI budget includes:

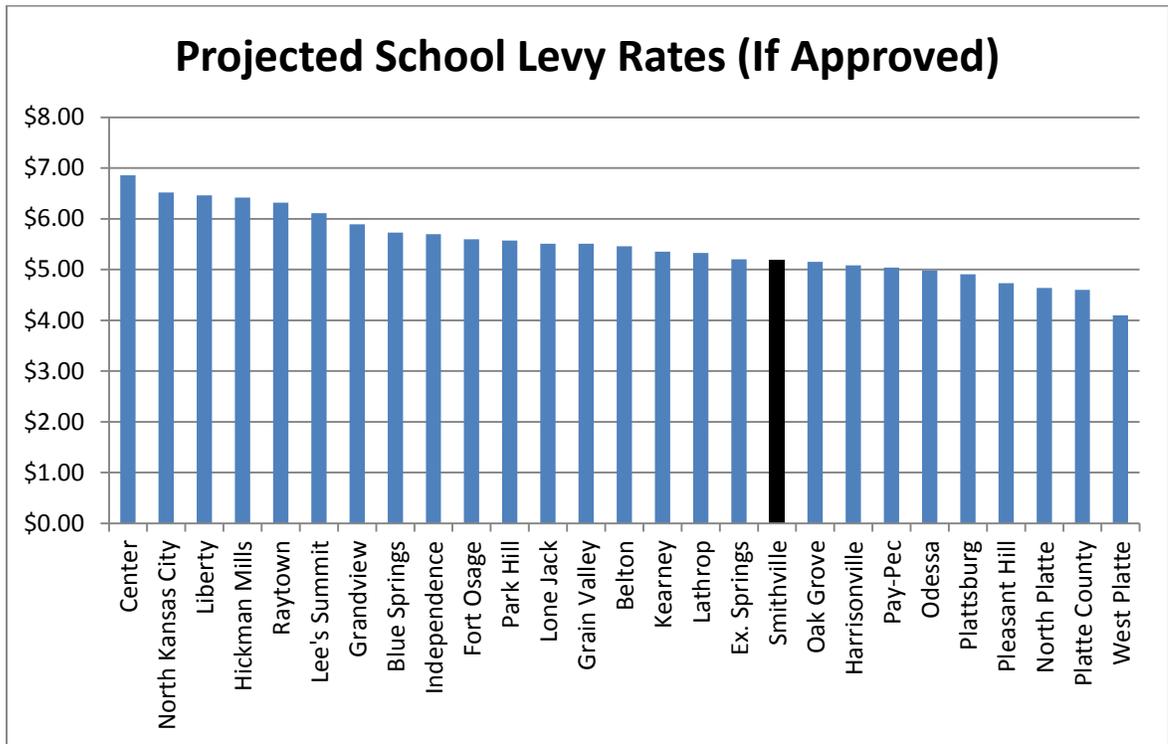
Elementary Site Work	\$1,200,000.00
Additional K-6 Elementary	\$14,245,637.00
Maple PES Entrance Renovation	\$600,000.00
Maple PES Bus/Parking	\$250,000.00
Total Construction	\$16,295,637.00
Construction Contingency (6%)	\$977,738.22
Architect / Engineers	\$814,781.85
Civil	\$70,000.00
Survey	\$20,000.00
Soils	\$10,000.00
Testing	\$120,000.00
Printing	\$40,000.00
Advertising	\$6,000.00
F F and E	\$1,629,563.70
Builder's Risk	\$50,000.00
Owner's Option Roof Repair	\$1,225,000.00
Phone System Upgrade	\$225,000.00
Project Total Expenses	\$21,483,720.77

6. **Why does this require a levy increase?** In 1997, patrons of the Smithville R-II School District approved a debt service levy increase that has allowed the district to implement the first five phases of its Master Building Plan without an additional increase in patron taxes. We no longer have borrowing capacity without increasing the operating revenue to fund construction and operations.

Phase I	1997	6.25 Million (UES and HS Additions)
Phase II	1999	6.8 Million (Classrooms UES, MS, HS, and Renovations at PES)
Phase III	2004	6.8 Million (Classrooms MS/HS and Activity Upgrades)
Phase IV	2007	9.8 Million (Classrooms PES/UES Early Childhood and Administration Building, and Activity Upgrades)
Phase V	2010	8.5 Million (District Performing Arts Center, FEMA Gym, Additional Parking, Renovations)

7. **Why \$0.79?** This is the exact amount calculated to make “lease purchase” payments to fund Phase VI of the Master Building plan and to operate the additional square footage. If the \$0.79 levy is approved, approximately \$0.64 of the question will fund construction and approximately \$0.15 will fund operations (utilities, staff, maintenance, supplies). The approved levy increase will expire after a period of 25 years after the lease purchase payments expire ‘rolling back’ the district’s operating levy and rolling back patron taxes.
8. **Didn’t the school district recently ask for a levy increase and it failed?** Yes, on April 3, 2013, the Smithville R-II School District placed a \$0.92 levy increase before the voters to construct an additional elementary, an 8 classroom addition onto the high school, a high school cafeteria expansion, a parking lot expansion at the high school, roofing improvements, telecommunication upgrades, and security entrance improvements. The issue failed 1490 NO votes to 866 YES votes. Following the election, the district revisited its project proposal. While the needs have not changed, the district prioritized these needs and put the proposal into two phases or issues, one to be presented to voters in 2014 and the other to be presented to voters in 2016, to respond to concerns that the increase was too much all at once.
9. **How much will the levy cost the average patron?** If you own a home with an appraised or market values of \$100,000, the assessment ratio for residential property is 19% yielding an assessed home valuation of \$19,000. The district’s current total levy is \$4.3988 per \$100.00 of assessed valuation, so you currently pay \$835.772 per year in school taxes. If the increase is realized, the new total levy would be \$5.1888 requiring the same \$100,000 homeowner to pay an additional \$150.10 per year or \$12.50 per month in school taxes.
10. **What happens if the levy does not pass?** Simply put, we need additional space to accommodate our increased enrollment. If the levy does not pass, our crowded schools will only become more crowded. We will be required to continue implementing a creative list of ideas to deal with increased student enrollment. That list includes: allowing class sizes to increase, putting art and music classes on a cart to travel among homerooms, adding additional mobile units to provide additional square footage, continuing to convert spaces not intended for instruction. Ultimately, to provide much needed square footage and to maintain quality programing, the district will continue to come to the voters asking for their help and investment in our community’s future.
11. **Has the Smithville R-II School District been good stewards of patrons’ tax dollars?** When district patrons approved a debt service levy increase in 1997 to implement Phase I of the district’s Master Building plan, the Board of Education pledged that it would fund the remaining three phases of the Master Building plan without a tax increase over the next 10 years. It is eighteen years later, and the pledge was met and exceeded. The district has completed five phases of building projects with no tax increase. Now, a tax levy increase is needed to fund the additional construction and operations.

12. Where does the Smithville R-II School District current levy rank compared to other districts, if approved?



13. Where will the additional elementary be built? The district owns approximately 10 acres located on the northeast corner of 188<sup>th</sup> and F Highway on the district's northern boundary.

14. If approved, what will be the building grade configurations and estimated building capacities after Phase VI?

K-6 Elementary (current PES)	Estimated Capacity	570 (+30)
K-6 Elementary (current UES)	Estimated Capacity	592 (-24)
K-6 Elementary (additional)	Estimated Capacity	425 (600 w/ Future Addition)
7-8 Middle School	Estimated Capacity	632
9-12 High School	Estimated Capacity	852

15. **How will the students be selected to attend the three K-6 Elementary Buildings?** In the spring of 2006, a committee of parents and educators met to consider current research and the experiences of area school districts in formulating a recommendation regarding the future grade configuration of elementary schools in the Smithville R-II School District. The committee unanimously recommended that with the opening of the 3<sup>rd</sup> elementary school, all elementary schools include grades Kindergarten through six and become neighborhood schools. Students will be selected to attend one of the three K-6 elementary schools based on where they live. The school district will adopt boundaries that define attendance areas within the Smithville School District. The process of establishing the K-6 boundaries will be stakeholder driven, transparent to the community, and approved by the Board of Education. The process of developing boundary lines will be assisted by a 3<sup>rd</sup> party demographer to consider logistical issues associated with the defining attendance areas such as enrollment balance, socio-economic balance, transportation distances and safety, maintaining neighborhoods and subdivisions, and future growth considerations.
16. **Why not just build another attendance center and reconfigure grade levels?** Related literature indicates that when students transition from one building to the next it creates a potential for a decrease in learning, stress levels are increased as students are required to acclimate to a new setting, and the opportunity for the school to build a rapport with families is reduced. Secondly, this concept would require two additional buildings making it fiscally irresponsible and unaffordable at this time in order to impact all of the grade levels of the current plan, it would take two additional buildings. Only adding one building would likely result in a pre-k-1, 2-3, and a 4-5 center. This scenario would not help the middle school which is our second most crowded school. Third, in a growing community such as Smithville, this model eventually becomes unmanageable as class sizes reach 300+ students per grade level creating buildings over 600 students (see question #18).
17. **Will neighborhood elementary schools affect transportation?** Yes, it is anticipated that transportation ride time will be reduced by approximately 20 minutes for students in grades K-6 primarily as a result of less time loading at two locations vs one attendance center. Transportation for students in grades 7-12 will not change.
18. **Why not just add more classrooms on to the current Primary Elementary?** Based on recommended best practice, an elementary school building reaches capacity at approximately 600 students before it becomes counter-productive for the learning environment, additional classrooms may be added to the current elementary increasing its capacity; however, there would be a need for additional art, music, kitchen space, cafeteria, health room, administrative space, parking, bus drop off/pick-up, etc. to accommodate the additional student capacity. Secondly, if the enrollment continues to increase, this would be a very costly short term solution.

19. **Why not just add more mobile classrooms where they are needed?** Mobile classrooms are temporary classrooms that have been used in the past by the Smithville School District to handle growth until more permanent space could be constructed. They are temporary solutions and present significant quality and security concerns. Secondly, see response on question #18.
20. **What is the timeline for construction?** If approved, the security and entrance improvements will be completed at the HS, MS, UES, and PES during the summer of 2015. The roofing improvements at the PES will also be completed during the summer of 2015. The additional elementary will be opened in the fall of 2016.
21. **What will be included in the entrance and security improvements?** Each building's main entrance will be enhanced to require visitors to not only "buzz in" to gain access to the building, but all visitors will also be required to enter through the building's office prior to accessing instructional areas.
22. **In addition to classroom spaces, what else will be funded with the ballot question?** If approved, an upgraded phone system will be installed throughout the district. The current system is outdated technology and parts to support the system are obsolete. The current phone system is unreliable creating a "life safety" concern. Also, if approved, new roofing sections will be replaced at the Primary Elementary, High School, and Middle School.
23. **Will patrons have future projects to consider?** Based on continued growth, the District's Master Building plan calls for future bond issues in 2016 and 2020.

2016	8-classroom addition onto the High School High School cafeteria expansion Additional Education wing on to K-6 Elementary (188 <sup>th</sup> and F Highway) High School Weight room and Wrestling Room Renovation of Existing Stage Area in Original Gym at High School
2020	4 <sup>th</sup> K-6 Elementary High School Classroom Addition Campus Parking Expansion

**24. How will this proposal appear on the ballot?**

To provide funds for constructing, improving, expanding, equipping, operating and maintaining school facilities, including a third elementary school, security and entrance improvements at all District buildings, roofing replacements and telecommunication upgrades, shall the Board of Education of the Smithville R-II School District be authorized to increase the District's operating tax levy ceiling by \$0.79 per one hundred dollars of assessed valuation for a period of 25 years?

If this question is approved, the operating tax levy ceiling of the District is estimated to increase from \$3.4388 to \$4.2288 per one hundred dollars of assessed valuation.

**25. When is the election?** Tuesday, November 4, 2014

**26. What percentage of voters must approve the levy issue proposal?** 50% plus 1 positive vote

**27. How do I register to vote?** Any individual 18 years of age or older on November 4, 2014 who is a resident of the Smithville R-II School District and is registered to vote may vote in this election. Individuals may register to vote at the Mid-Continent Public Library in Smithville or at Smithville City Hall. Additionally individuals may register to vote in the Smithville R-II School District offices located at 655 South Commercial Ave. Patrons may also register to vote by visiting [www.sos.mo.gov/elections/register2vote](http://www.sos.mo.gov/elections/register2vote)

**28. When is the last day to register to vote?** The deadline to register is October 8, 2014, and the election date is November 4, 2014.

**29. Who may I contact for additional information?** For additional information, please contact Dr. Todd Schuetz, Superintendent of Schools, ([schuetzt@smithville.k12.mo.us](mailto:schuetzt@smithville.k12.mo.us)) Mr. Wayne Krueger, Assistant Superintendent for Support Services, ([kruegerw@smithville.k12.mo.us](mailto:kruegerw@smithville.k12.mo.us)) or Dr. Michelle Kratofil, ([kratofim@smithville.k12.mo.us](mailto:kratofim@smithville.k12.mo.us)) Assistant Superintendent for Academic Services or by calling the Smithville R-II School District office at (816) 532-0406.

Please Vote on November 4<sup>th</sup>