

Important update on proposed bond for Dolores School District Re-4a

The Dolores School District is considering a bond measure for the November 2023 ballot. The Board of Education is still gathering feedback, and a ballot issue has not been submitted for the purpose of having the title set. The district sent a Community Update in June that described its plan to address flood risk and improve the safety and security of its school buildings and classroom environments. We understand that community members have questions about the bond proposal, and we want to provide as much information as possible. **The following addresses concerns that community members have raised in the district's recent survey.**

Facility plan will remove schools from floodplain and improve safety

The district's Facilities Master Plan prioritizes addressing the floodplain risk for the campus and school buildings to avoid the type of flooding that happened this year. The Facilities Master Plan was developed by a committee of school board members, district administrators and teachers, town officials, parents and community members, and the committee's work was supported by an architecture firm that specializes in school campuses and buildings. Their primary focus was safety, health and security of the district's school buildings and campus.

The district's new construction will follow the Science Building, which was part of the district's previous voter-approved bond and BEST grant. **The Science Building was built 3 feet above the surface and was not in any danger of flooding during this year's spring runoff.**

Facilities Master Plan outlines several steps to mitigate flood risk, including:

- ✓ Working with civil engineering experts to identify and address flood risks before any construction work begins.
- ✓ Constructing a new two-story high school that will be raised 3 feet above the floodplain.
- ✓ Improving drainage throughout the campus to ensure all buildings are safe from high water.

Additional safety and security improvements will include:

- ✓ Creating a secure commons space to limit access to the campus.
- ✓ Providing covered access to the commons from the new high school and middle school.
- ✓ Demolishing the current middle school and creating an open safe-space area.
- ✓ Replacing existing, unsecured middle school playground in the footprint of old middle school.
- ✓ Providing secure double-vestibule entrances at all new entrance points to reduce the number of unsecured exterior building entrances.
- ✓ Correcting Americans with Disabilities Act issues for proper accessibility in all buildings.
- ✓ Improving air quality by installing proper air-conditioning units with air-quality filtering.

District increased pay and provided bonuses for teachers and staff

The Dolores School District has worked over the past few years to increase salaries and provide bonuses to teachers and staff so that the district can attract and retain the most talented faculty and staff to teach our children and operate the district. Ensuring that our staff is properly and fairly compensated is a priority of the Board of Education and the administration. **On average, district teachers and staff have received a \$5,000 increase in their salaries over the past three years.**

- ✓ Since the 2021-22 school year, the base hourly rate for starting Classified employees increased from \$12.32 per hour to \$15.75 per hour for the 2023-24 school year.
- ✓ Base salary for a Certified teacher with a bachelor's degree increased from \$32,051 for the 2021-22 school year to \$37,450 for the 2023-24 school year.
- ✓ Base annual salary for a Certified teacher with a master's degree increased from \$36,553 for the 2021-22 school year to \$41,730 for the 2023-24 school year.
- ✓ Salaries for all existing teachers and staff were increased over this same period.
- ✓ Additionally, teachers and staff have received stipends to also address compensation, including an average of \$2,700 from federal pandemic relief funds and another \$3,000 from the district's general fund.

Bond approval will help the district apply for Colorado BEST grant

The Dolores School District will apply for a Colorado BEST grant to ensure we leverage state dollars to invest in our local schools. Having bond approval from voters as part of next year's BEST application will show we are prepared and ready to make improvements to the campus and schools. The grant provides matching funds **that do not need to be repaid**, but the district must provide matching funds to receive a grant.

The proposed bond will be \$12 to \$14 million, depending on assessed values that will be available in late August. **This would allow the District to apply for \$17.5 million or more through the BEST grant program.** If the bond election and BEST grant application are both successful, this would provide the District with sufficient funds to complete its campus and building plans.

The bond would be contingent on the District receiving the BEST grant. It would not be issued and the tax would not be collected until the grant was awarded.

Estimated tax increase for bond:

Residential:
(\$100,000 in actual value)

\$5 to \$6
per month

Commercial:
(\$100,000 in actual value)

\$24 to \$25
per month