

Proposition S - Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

Here is a link to the [Proposition S - Information Page from the Valley R-VI Website](#). It includes answers to many of these questions and additional information.

1. **What is Proposition S?** It is a Proposition for a \$.55 Tax Levy increase in order to provide funds to complete safety and security improvements; to enhance student instructional facilities through new construction or renovation of existing spaces; to complete other remodeling and repair improvements to the existing district facilities; and to meet the additional operating needs of the District?

[Here is a link to a flyer with the actual ballot language for review](#)

2. **What is our “Why” for Proposition S?** The District CSIP (Continual School Improvement Plan) Committee (made up of stakeholders - parents/guardians, patrons, business owners, teachers, staff, students, administration, board members) approved a district CSIP Plan in May of 2023. The top three goals were:

CSIP Goal 1: *Enhance and improve the district safety and security*

CSIP Goal 2: *Create a comprehensive long-range facility plan.*

CSIP Goal 3: *Proactively budget for major capital expenditures.*

The district completed a long range Facility Plan with input from Independent Architects, Contractors, and Staff Surveys.

- Top Needs:
 - Improve Safety & Security
 - Improve JH/HS 1953, 1965, 1975 construction that needs renovation
 - The original JH/HS was built in 1953. It had major renovations in 1965 and 1975. The JH/HS received a C- rating from architects and engineers that review the building. Safety, Security, and Student usage renovations were recommended.

[Here is a link of a presentation that includes the independent architect, engineering firm rating of our current facilities for review](#)

3. What are the specific Safety, Security and Student Usage Renovation and New Construction Items that would occur from Proposition S?

Projects would be completed in a prioritized order based upon funding:

- Electrical Service Upgrade - throughout the JH/HS - to safely allow for student/staff/community needs and technology upgrades
- Secure Safety Vestibule Entrances/Offices with ADA Accessibility and improved visibility at the Elementary & JH/High School
- Security Access System for exterior doors at Elementary & JH/High School
- New Intercom System for safety and school communication at both the JH/HS and Elementary
- Upgrades to exterior lighting in the front of the campus for more safety & security in the front parking lot
- ADA accessibility to all parts of our JH/HS campus - Ex JH/HS band/choir room, math room, and science technology engineering room
- All students passing conducted inside our school buildings - no longer requiring students to go outside of the building to access classrooms - New Construction at the JH/High School adding a Library / Media Center, Art Room & Classroom/Storage, Ag & Weight Room Renovation
- Road connecting on district property connecting the main campus to the preschool - could be used for district business and in an emergency situation for buses and the public to access campus from Hwy. 21
- Upgrades to JH/HS kitchen & cafeteria - ex. New walk in freezer, new steam table, upgrades to cafeteria for student and public use
- Renovation to Gym stage - to assist our performing art students - ex. New stage curtain & rigging, upgrades to stage floor, upgrades to stage light and sound system, upgrade JH/HS gym bleachers
- Acoustical Treatments at the Elementary Domes - to assist sound for quality learning environment
- HVAC Unit Upgrades with UV lights

[Here is a link to renderings of some of the proposed improvements for review](#)

3. How much would Proposition S projects cost and how would the district pay for the projects? Projects would be paid for from an approximate \$4.75 million 20 year lease purchase with funds generated from the tax levy.

4. How will this affect me and my taxes? Our current tax rate is \$3.7808. The school tax rate would increase \$.55 to 4.3308. An example for comparison would be a \$100,000 appraised value residence would have an annual tax increase of \$104.50 per year. That would be \$8.71 per month. The proposed tax rate would still be lower than many neighboring schools and schools of our size throughout the state. Improvements to the school district would also be available for community usage needs and have been shown to improve property values. Our school is a major area of pride for our community. Most importantly, it provides a high quality education for our students. This would be an investment in our community and our students. Improving the facilities will enhance the students' learning experience for years to come.

[Here is a link that gives specific tax examples for comparison.](#)

5. In 2000 the district patrons voted for a \$.70 tax levy increase to increase taxes from \$3.26 to \$3.96. It was to pay for the Upper Elementary Dome and Dome Gym. If that was paid off recently why has the tax rate not gone down and why can't those funds be used for these new renovations and construction?

In 2007-08 the tax rate went down from \$4.12 to \$3.47.

Tax Rates are adjusted based upon the Hancock Amendment and are approved by our State Auditor's Office and the Local School Board.

Our current 2023-24 tax rate is \$3.78. This is \$.18 below the 2000 (\$3.96) tax rate and well below the district's high tax rate from 2004-05 of \$4.16.

[Here is a link of the Valley R-VI tax rates from 1993-94 to 2023-24 for comparison](#)

6. Did the district recently invest money in Certificates of Deposit? If so, why were those funds not used for improvements like the electrical upgrade?

The district has invested some reserve funds in 12 month Certificates of Deposit. These are reserve funds that could not be used for Capital Project projects like the electrical upgrades due to state school finance guidelines. The district's banking institution recommended doing this (as many other school districts have done) with allowable funds. It is sound financial planning to take advantage of current high interest rates as opposed to keeping funds in low interest bank accounts.

7. Did the district receive COVID relief funds? Can those be used to complete the needed renovations and constructions?

The district (and all state public schools) received COVID relief (ESSER) funds. Those are one time non recurring funds that had mandated spending requirements.

8. What happens if the tax levy increase is not approved?

If the tax levy increase is not approved, the school district may be forced to make difficult decisions regarding budget cuts and reductions in services due to facility needs. This could impact the quality of education provided to students, as well as the overall functioning of our schools.

9. How can I learn more about the proposed tax levy increase?

Information about the proposed tax levy increase, including details on how the funds will be used and the potential impact on taxpayers, will be made available through various channels, including community meetings & school tours on March 12th 6-7:30 P.M & March 16th 10-11:30 A.M., school district websites ([See link for Prop S information](#)), informational pamphlets, and other communication platforms. Additionally, taxpayers are encouraged to reach out to school district officials with any questions or concerns they may have.

10. How can I participate in the decision-making process regarding the tax levy increase?

Taxpayers can participate in the decision-making process by attending community meetings, providing feedback to school district officials, engaging in discussions with fellow community members, and ultimately casting their vote on the proposition during the designated election period. It's essential for all stakeholders to be informed and actively involved in shaping the future of our schools.

11. Why did the district decide to not build a new JH/HS building now? Architects came back *with estimated costs of \$16 to \$22 million to build a new junior/senior high school.*

Current building costs are calculated at \$425 per square foot and a minimum of 180 square feet per student. We would need to build the junior/high school building to house a minimum of 225 students-275 students to allow for possible future growth. *With our current district assessed valuation, the board felt that would be too high of a tax levy increase for our district patrons and not feasible.*

12. Why has the stage and gym upgrades been included on this proposition since they do not tie to safety and security?

Proposition S also includes student usage improvements. The stage and gym upgrades would be prioritized if funds are still available after essential safety & security upgrades. Here is some description of the need from Ms. Lauer - Valley R-VI - English/Language Arts/Drama Teacher:

Our stage was originally designed for graduation ceremonies, so it is very limiting to produce actual plays. We are in need of lighting and sound equipment and soft goods in order to make the space functional. We also have no backstage area or storage area which has been a consistent problem. As of right now, we do not have an act curtain or a way for actors to get from one side of the stage to the other without being seen. This has proved to be quite the challenge when directing and blocking our productions. We had a curtain about 6 years ago, but even then it was vandalized and we made due with what we had. If we had an act curtain, that would also help our students share the space. It would help protect drama's sets while athletics took place on the gym floor.

Drama plays an important role in our students' education. Like athletics, it fosters a sense of teamwork and collaboration. It also gives our students a creative outlet and a sense of responsibility. I would love to see a usable stage space, so we can offer our students more opportunities. I want them to be prepared for what they should expect if they continue their journey in the arts. We have a surprisingly large group of our students involved in the drama club (we had over 30 children involved in our Halloween show) who would benefit greatly from having a more functional space.

13. The state recently offered Safety Grants for schools. Did the district apply for these funds and if so how has it been used?

The state did offer safety grants in 2023-24. They were competitive grants. The district applied and was awarded \$50,000 of state funds for safety improvements. After surveying the needs

and the amount we received, funds were used to: Finish fencing around the elementary playground/community walking track, upgrade district district radios & bus radios (so buses have better communication throughout the routes), and purchase [HALO](#) on-line security sensors (for fire, carbon monoxide, vaping, and other safety notifications).

14. **Why did the district decide to run Proposition S now?**

Any school district that is preparing for the future needs a plan that moves beyond basic maintenance and into renovations and new construction. COVID relief funds and fiscally responsible budgeting have allowed the district to build up reserves. Some of these reserves need to be saved for trying financial times. We all know it is not a matter of if, but when more difficult financial times will affect our state economy and in turn our schools. That being said, it is sound to use some of the reserves now to help with essential safety, security, and student usage renovations and construction. *The school board approved running Proposition S now because allowable reserves can be used to reduce the needed tax levy increase. We are able to get \$.90 of tax levy construction for only a \$.55 tax levy increase by using our current allowable reserves.*

Construction prices often go up over time and reserves generated from one time funds are also likely to not be available in years to come. It is anticipated that the needed tax levy and overall cost would be higher to complete the same construction in years to come.

Many of our district buildings are older. Like any older buildings they need, and will continue to need, renovations and new construction that goes beyond general maintenance. The construction being proposed is needed now. If assessed valuation continues to grow in our district and property tax collection is consistent this tax levy will pay down the proposed lease purchase. In that case it could also be used to plan for future district phases of renovation and new construction for future district/community needs.