

HUGOTON SCHOOLS SCHEDULES NOVEMBER BOND ISSUE VOTE

The Board of Education of Stevens County USD No. 210 (Hugoton) took the first steps toward a capital improvement bond issue recently. At their regular board meeting on August 18th, the Board approved a resolution setting the financial plan for the proposal. At a special meeting on August 25th, the Board approved a revised resolution improving the ballot language for the November 4 bond election.

The District for years has been evaluating educational programs and facilities and prioritizing needs for a capital improvement program. In recent months, a patron committee has met numerous times to provide input into the district's challenges and proposed solutions. Architects and a financial advisor have assisted both the Board and the committee through the process.

The November proposal requests voter authority to issue no more than \$21 million in general obligation bonds to finance the majority of the estimated costs of the proposed projects.

The major components of the proposal would construct a new Early Childhood Development Center facility including a FEMA/tornado shelter within the District. A new middle school academic wing is proposed to replace the outdated and inadequate existing educational wing originally constructed 47 years ago. Also proposed is a new addition to provide a commons/cafeteria area, kitchen, high school administration area and other improvements that will connect the high school with the other areas at the middle/high school campus. An addition to the high school would create a PE classroom, weight room, locker rooms, and a new wrestling area that would also double as a FEMA/tornado shelter for both the middle and high schools.

Steve Shogren of George K. Baum & Company, the District's financial advisor, indicated that now is an opportune time to consider needed capital improvements with a bond issue. He indicated that interest rates are near 40-year lows for the proposed bond issue. Shogren also shared with the Board that the District's mill levy is the lowest in southwest Kansas and one of the lowest of all 296 school districts in the State.

The 15-year bond issue, if approved by voters, will require a mill levy estimated at 6.27 mills—the equivalent of added taxes of \$4.51 per month on a \$75,000 home. Shogren indicated that this levy is well below the average of the nearly 200 school districts that have approved bonds to improve their schools in Kansas.

The District is organizing a volunteer K.I.D.S. Committee (Keep Improving District Schools) to encourage voter registration, develop and share information with district patrons, and create awareness prior to the November election date. Anyone interested in helping with this effort is encouraged to contact the district offices at 544-4397.