



Twenty Questions about the November 6 Bond Issue

- 1. What is the exact amount of the SBISD bond package?**
\$597,150,000
- 2. What are bonds and how can they be used?**
Bonds are used to pay for capital improvements, such as constructing, improving or maintaining facilities and purchasing buses, technology or school sites. Bond money *cannot* be used for salaries or teaching supplies. Funds generated through the Interest and Sinking (I & S) tax rate can only be used for paying back the bonds over time, much like a mortgage.
- 3. Specifically, how will bond money be used in Spring Branch?**
The bond package will include replacing 12 forty to seventy year old elementary schools; maintaining and upgrading campus air conditioning & heating and electrical & plumbing systems; providing required maintenance and basic necessary repairs at each campus; constructing additional classrooms where needed to accommodate projected enrollment growth; expanding high school science labs to meet new state mandates; and upgrading safety & security, classroom technology, transportation and athletics.
- 4. Who decided what school improvements were needed in SBISD?**
The Board of Trustees called the election following a two-year study of the district's 5.6 million square feet (or 130 acres) of educational and support facilities, a six-month analysis by a 65-member community-based Bond Advisory Committee chaired by two Spring Branch parents, and a two-month Board review. The process included development of a Five-Year Educational Plan, a Technology Plan and a Long Range Facilities Plan, which collectively identified more than \$800 million in potential facility improvement needs.
- 5. How much does the state of Texas and the federal government pay toward building new buildings or improving existing schools in SBISD?**
***Not one cent.* All funds for school sites and construction must come from the sale of bonds approved by residents of the district.**

- 6. If approved by voters, how and when will bonds be sold?**
Bonds are sold through advertised competitive bidding or through an underwriter selected by the Board. Bonds are sold only as they are needed to begin work on the various Board-approved projects. No debt is incurred by the district until the bonds are sold.
- 7. How long will this bond money last?**
The administration anticipates bonds would be sold and construction/renovation would occur over a ten-year period of time.
- 8. How old are school buildings in Spring Branch?**
Most campuses were built in the 1950's and 1960's. Spring Branch Elementary School was built in 1938.
- 9. Why do we need to replace schools that had new additions recently completed?**
The 12 schools recommended for rebuilding were constructed between 1938 and 1967. Replacing rather than renovating these older schools will save an estimated \$55 million in renovation costs. Additions built within the past few years funded by the 1999 bond issue, such as library media centers and multi-purpose rooms, will be retained.
- 10. How can we be assured that bond funds will be used as promised?**
The Board of Trustees will appoint a Bond Oversight Committee to review all expenditures to ensure the recommended plan is being followed.
- 11. How will the bond funds impact school safety and security?**
Funds will be used for new or upgraded lighting, new or upgraded fencing, new or upgraded fire/burglar alarm systems, CCTV monitoring software and digital security cameras at each campus and support facility.
- 12. How will the bond funds impact technology?**
Funds will be used for computer replacements, upgraded library-multimedia centers, flexible computer labs, service replacement, VOIP telephone systems, wireless networks, portable keyboards, video conferencing mobile carts, direct cable TV access, classroom electronic whiteboards, mobile projectors, active voting machines and multimedia carts.
- 13. How was money from the last bond issue used?**
Spring Branch voters overwhelmingly approved a \$250 million Facility Improvement Plan in 1999. The bond issue allowed SBISD to finance capital improvement projects throughout the district over the past eight years, including renovation and expansion of current campuses; safety code upgrades; ADA compliance; Title IX modifications; and construction of four Schools for Early Learning.

14. What impact did the 1999 bond issue have on my school taxes?

When it was proposed, the last bond issue was estimated to be completed in ten years with a total increase of nine cents in the debt service to pay off the bonds. However, the Board of Trustees held the line on taxes and the total school tax rate remained the same for five years. Because of increased property values, favorable interest rates and timely Board action on school refinancing, the debt service portion of the tax rate has only increased slightly over the past several years, while the general fund rate has decreased since 2003.

15. How do SBISD school taxes compare to other districts in Harris County?

Spring Branch homeowners pay the *second lowest* school taxes in the Houston area. SBISD is one of the few districts in the area that gives taxpayers relief by offering every tax exemption allowed by law, including a 20% homestead exemption. School taxes in Spring Branch are *lower* than Katy, Spring, Crosby, Channelview, Humble, Aldine, Huffman, Alief, Klein, Tomball, North Forest, Pasadena, Goose Creek, Galena Park, Deer Park, Cypress-Fairbanks, LaPorte and Sheldon.

16. How will passage of the new bond issue affect my school taxes?

If you are 65 or older with homestead exemption or disability exemption, the bond issue will NOT affect your school taxes. For most senior homeowners, school taxes will be LOWER this fall as a result of the constitutional amendment approved by Texas voters in May. Your taxes will remain frozen at the lower level and will NOT be increased, regardless of the bond election.

For the owner of a \$100,000 home, the bond issue will cost an estimated \$63.00 a year, or \$5.25 a month. For the owner of a \$200,000 home, the bond issue will cost an estimated \$141.00 a year, or \$11.75 a month.

17. Since we are a Chapter 41 (“Robin Hood”) school district, how much of the bond money will leave SBISD?

Bond funds are *not* subject to the state’s “Robin Hood” funding formula. All of the proceeds from bond funds approved by district voters will remain in SBISD to directly benefit our children.

18. How much local tax money has been sent to the state because of “Robin Hood”?

More than \$55 million in local school taxes so far, and the funding formula remains in existence until lawmakers change it.

19. Where can I get detailed information on the recommendations?

Notes from the numerous Bond Advisory Committee meetings, handouts, research documents and the entire Bond Plan as approved by the Board of Trustees is available at www.springbranchisd.com. Each campus also has copies of the detailed 80-page plan.

20. Where and when do I vote?

Because the school bond election is being held in conjunction with the county election, early voting by personal appearance will take place October 22 through November 2 at any early voting polling location established by Harris County. In SBISD, early voting polling locations are the Harris County Courthouse Annex at 1721 Pech Road and the Altharetta Yeargin Art Museum at 901 Yorkchester (on the Northwest corner of the Westchester Academy campus.)

Election day sites will be established by the Harris County Clerk and publicized prior to November 6.

Esta publicación también se puede obtener en español llamando al 713-464-1511, ext: 2272.

Có thể xin bản tiếng Việt của ấn phẩm này bằng cách gọi số 713-464-1511, ext: 2272.

