

To: Heather Manchester
From: Dan Demeritt
Re: Elementary Building Committee Survey Questions and Infographic
Date: October 30, 2024 – VERSION 2

School construction policy and decision-making criteria are incredibly complex. A student-conducted survey of general interest voters on election day should not be developed or intended to take the place of the specific decisions the highly engaged members of the Elementary Building Committee will make in December.

A student-conducted survey is also not a scientific sampling of the electorate that can reliably predict a future outcome at the ballot box.

In my view, the election day survey should strive to increase awareness about the school construction opportunities and assess general preferences respondents have for addressing school facility needs within the district using examples.

All or Nothing Awareness – A Fully State-Funded Elementary School Project

The Elementary School Construction Project for Oxford Hills seems to involve an all-or-nothing decision that needs to be conveyed in stark and simple terms to the communities.

We accept all the state standards and have no local costs for constructing an efficient new school or we retain control and the \$43 million in costs of maintaining our existing facilities in every district community.

I have created a fork-in-the road infographic that I think captures the binary nature of the choice before the district and high-level impacts of the decision.

Survey – Simple Assessment of Citizen Preferences

I think the survey idea is excellent. To be effective, the survey needs to be brief, easy to understand and unbiased. This [short video from Pew Research](#) does a good job explaining the basics.

I have drafted a survey on the next page. After review with the elementary building committee, I'd suggest we change the formatting so it's easier for students to use on election day.

School Construction Student-Conducted Survey – OPTION 2

November 5, 2024 – Draft, Dan Demeritt 10/29/24 DRAFT

INTRODUCTION

Hi, Thank you for voting. I'm _____, a student at Oxford Hills Comprehensive High School.

I am conducting a survey for the Oxford Hills Elementary Building Committee. Can I ask you three questions about your preferences for how we should build and maintain our local elementary schools?

____ Yes. Proceed with Questions. ____ No. Record refusal. End of Survey.

Background

The Elementary Building Committee is considering two different approaches.

Local Control and Cost Option

One option keeps what we have now and looks entirely to property taxpayers to pay for about \$43 million in new school construction and repairs with 20-year bonds. This would include the \$25 million cost of building a new building in West Paris to serve 125 students.

The seven remaining elementary schools in the district need \$18 million in repairs to address deferred maintenance. These schools all operate at less than 75% of building capacity.

Oxford Hills property taxpayers will bear the full cost of building and maintaining elementary schools in each of the district's eight communities because the state will not fund underutilized buildings.

Fully State-Funded Option

The second option would build a fully state-funded elementary school in Norway and keep the district's existing elementary school buildings in Hebron, Oxford, Otisfield and Paris.

If the new school building adheres to state standards, there will be no costs for local taxpayers for the new school. Closing our schools with the greatest repair needs will also eliminate more than half of the district's deferred maintenance costs.

Survey Questions

Question 1: Do you support building a fully state-funded elementary school in Norway and keeping the district's existing buildings open in Hebron, Oxford, Otisfield and Paris?

____ yes ____ No

Question 2: If the Oxford Hills District does NOT pursue a fully state-funded construction project, it will cost about \$18 million to repair the 7 elementary schools open today.

Would you support an \$18 million dollar elementary school deferred maintenance bond that would cost NAME OF COMMUNITY property taxpayers approximately 20 YEAR REPAYMENT over the 20-year life of the bond (*See Question #2 Totals Below*)?

____ Yes

____ No

Question 3: The Agnes Gray Elementary School in West Paris is not safe for students and staff. The community's 125 elementary students now attend school in Paris and Norway.

Would you support a \$25 million school construction bond to build a new elementary school in West Paris that would cost NAME OF COMMUNITY property taxpayers about 20 YEAR REPAYMENT over the 20-year life of the bond (*see Question #3 Totals Below*) ?

____ Yes

____ No

End of Survey. Thank voters and please offer a copy of the Fork-In-The-Road Infographic.

20-Year Municipal Costs

20-Year Municipal Costs	QUESTION #2 \$18 Million Deferred Maintenance	QUESTION #3 \$25 Million NEW – West Paris School
Harrison	\$4,385,950	\$5,946,600
Hebron	\$984,852	\$1,335,292
Norway	\$4,639,781	\$6,290,752
Otisfield	\$2,613,086	\$3,542,900
Oxford	\$4,309,727	\$5,843,254
Paris	\$3,750,627	\$5,085,210
Waterford	\$2,064,237	\$2,798,754
West Paris	\$1,360,598	\$1,844,739

