

July 6, 2017

To the Board of Education:

The LWVS Committee studying the District Facilities Bond appreciates the Board of Education's June 27<sup>th</sup> invitation to community groups to comment on facilities issues; however, we will instead take the opportunity today to share with the Board and the public background on the League's study process and what we need from the District in order for our League membership to be in position to evaluate a bond proposal.

The League of Women Voters of Scarsdale is a nonpartisan political organization that promotes political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government, and we only take a stand on issues after careful member study, discussion and consensus.

In order to educate members of the League and the public on the school facilities bond, our eight-member study committee is committed to an open-minded approach to fact-gathering based on a framework of multiple, objective lines of inquiry broken into three main areas: (1) decision making process, (2) educational value, and (3) cost benefit analysis.

Despite all the information that the District has provided to date, we struggle to conduct our study due to numerous factors, including the:

- (1) Rapid pace of the process;
- (2) Overwhelming volume of data being presented at each public meeting;
- (3) Constant shifts in narrative following real-time District decision-making;
- (4) Substantial number of remaining unknowns pending future results from Board requested professional analyses;
- (5) Growing list of yet to be answered League and community member questions; and
- (6) Most importantly, the absence of a clear statement of the Board's overall objective as it relates to the quality of our schools and Scarsdale's educational values.

Without adequate time to process consistent information, clear, research-based criteria for assessment, and a coherent picture of what our buildings need to provide in order to preserve and enhance a high quality Scarsdale education, members of the League and the community lack the tools needed to evaluate a facilities bond proposal. Both the League and the public's informed perspective depends on answers to such key questions as:

- What is the School Board’s decision-making process for building community-wide support? And what has the School Board done or plan to do to actively engage and inform District residents, parents, students, and educators so that we may realize a shared educational vision and achieve broad community support for the proposed work in the Bond?
- What educational needs and community values are met by the proposed facilities projects? And what is the objective standard and reference point for measuring whether the recommended work will achieve optimal learning environments for all Scarsdale students now and into the future?
- What are the benefits and cost justifications of the proposed projects?

A successful District bond proposal that makes sense for our community requires us to work together. To this end, it would be helpful if we all start from the same place and proceed forward together in a methodical manner, with a shared understanding of the basic underlying assumptions and overall District goals and educational values driving the process that a proposed facilities bond will address.

Sincerely,

Mary Beth Evans, Chair  
School Facilities Bond Study Committee

Linda Doucette-Ashman, President  
League of Women Voters of Scarsdale