

## The "R" Word

### A Successful Referendum Passage is a Wonderful Feeling.

#### What a School District may not know.

- How much will it cost?
- What needs to be done?
- What will the voters approve?

These are often the unanswered questions posed by school board members and administrators as they face the "R" word, referendum. Before the question can be put to the public, answers must be obtained. Who can answer them?

Our experience has demonstrated that a team of architects, contractors and mechanical engineers working with school administrators and citizens of the district can develop a successful referendum package that the public will approve. It is, however, never an easy task.

#### What next?

The first task of the Architect/Engineer/Contractor (AEC) team is to examine the physical plant(s) of the respective school district to determine the rehabilitation needs, life/safety needs and cosmetic needs of the structures. This is followed by examining the district's current and future demographic expectations to enable the AEC team to make projections of the district's overall needs at the present and into the future.

#### Can't work in a vacuum.

The project solving task is incomplete without the citizens of the district working in concert with school administrators and the AEC team to answer many unknowns.

- What size schools do the citizens want? Elementary? Middle? High School?
- What programs do they want in the schools? Year-round education? Full day kindergarten?
- How does the district attain academic excellence?

#### Architects in the Back Seat.

Again, our experience shows that the greater the number of citizens participating in the process, the greater the success. The AEC team can provide the data needed for the citizens to formulate a successful referendum package.

- Cost of remodeling versus new construction
- Cost of various construction methods
- Size and program of spaces to support the student populations desired by the citizens
- Time frames for project construction
- Equal facilities throughout the district

#### Something for everyone.

History has told the AEC team that it is never possible to fund 100% of the needs. The AEC team can help the citizens evaluate various referendum packages that address the needs throughout a district and then help formulate a recommendation to the school board.

#### The referendum recommendation test.

- Will the citizens of the district support the package and at what cost?
- Does it truly address realistic needs throughout the district?
- Is it a broad based citizen generated and supported plan?
- If a district is growing rapidly, does it look into the future with a plan to address growth after the passage of the current referendum package?

#### What did we leave out?

Depending on the resources of the district and the availability of staff support, it may be necessary to include additional members on the AEC team. These are often education specialists who will address the following:

- Technology
- Special education programs
- Demographics of the student growth

- Referendum specialists who sample and evaluate the voting climate of the district in relationship to various referendum amounts and project programs

#### A success story.

On November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2000 the citizens of Community Unit School District #300 in Carpentersville, Illinois voted yes for a \$88 million dollar construction program for building rehabilitation and new construction. This combined with the \$14.3 million received from the Illinois Capital Development Board enabled CUSD 300 to have the most successful referendum package passed at the November 7<sup>th</sup> election. In August of 2002, four new elementary schools will open in CUSD 300 to provide educational environments for 2680 students. Other additions and remodeling projects are also underway in a program that addresses needs in all buildings in the district. On November 17, 2001 at the annual IASB conference in Chicago, a team consisting of Tom Hay, Director of Instructional Services of C.U.S.D. 300, Linda Rafanello, a citizen of C.U.S.D. 300 and Vice President of Public Finance, LaSalle Bank and Dave Henderson from the C.U.S.D. 300 Advisory Committee and leader of the citizen based Facility Action Committee for Education (FACE) will tell their success story entitled "Facilities Planning, the 'Why' and 'How' of Community Involvement". Charles Burnidge of Burnidge Cassell will moderate the panel. We invite all of you to attend to hear this exciting story.

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