

QuickPoint! - Trust is Earned, Not Given

By John A. Charles, Jr.

The Portland School Board (PPS) wants voters to approve a construction bond measure of \$1.8 billion in May. If approved, the measure would authorize the Board to impose taxes on all properties within the district to pay the principal and interest on bonds for the next 30 years. The total cost of debt service would likely be \$3.5 billion or more.

In any bond campaign, advocates are saying to voters, “trust us.” Should we trust the school board?

No.

Voters approved a \$1.2 billion school bond measure in 2020, which allocated \$311 million to rebuild Jefferson high school. Four years later, the budget has been increased to \$491 million, but there is no school.

The 2020 bond also included \$60 million to create something called the Center for Black Student Excellence. None of the money has been spent, and no one at the district can even explain what the Center will be, who will operate it, or how many students it will serve.

In 2022, the state legislature gave PPS \$120 million to relocate Tubman middle school. The money hasn’t been spent, and the district now admits there are no available sites for a new school in NE Portland.

The school board needs to show that it can manage money before asking voters for more.

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