

A funny thing happened on May 12th. The town that had become infamous statewide for the multiple bond issue failures said 'ENOUGH'. Yes, the town whose "Main Street" is called Division, came together for the better good of the community. Many of you will recall that is the day of the bond election in the Guthrie school district. The issue on the ballot was no small hurdle for success. A successful election would place the district in debt for the largest amount in district history and burden the community property holders with, in most cases, an 18% property tax increase. A 60% super-majority was required to approve the issue. The story ends with the community sacrificing for their children similar to most communities in our state who place children ahead themselves.

Along the way, there were funny stories told to me by volunteers who wanted the issue to pass. One person told of a wonderful encounter on the front porch with a retired resident in our district who greatly appreciated the visit. The result of the personal contact was a pledge of support and an endorsement to everyone in their coffee group. Another citizen voiced their dissatisfaction with the City of Guthrie with regard to water, code enforcement and other items the school district has no control over, citing this as the reason they would be voting no. Of course there were also humorous stories about being chased by dogs and fortunately no firearms.

In recent years, Oklahoma school districts have been criticized by opponents of public education for trying to "hide" bond elections at times when fewer voters would go to the polls. Despite this being the only item on the ballot, the voter participation in the election was roughly 1/3 of all eligible voters. This might sound like a low participation rate but is actually very high. It was also a much greater participation percentage than the Guthrie City Council and Mayoral elections. A reason for the high participation was likely an active information campaign from the "Yes" team. Local and statewide media became engaged as well as our students and staff who were holding up signs after school and on the weekends or marching down Division St. Clearly, the election wasn't hidden from the community so a true voice was heard.

The constitutionally required super-majority (60% yes vote) has been a major hurdle in past elections. Since 1999, 7 of the last 11 failed propositions would have passed if a simple majority were all that was required. Earning a 77% yes vote signaled the highest support for a bond issue in 38 years. I would call that a mandate of support by the community for our schools.

I was happy to receive congratulatory messages, calls and visits from three of my predecessors (Dr. Jack Herron, Max Townsend and Terry Simpson). They all expressed support and elation because they know the needs of our district and still care about our community. There was one person who befriended me upon my arrival in Guthrie but was unable to offer congratulations. Prior to his passing, Bill Waggoner and I shared a moment in his hospital room regarding the failed election in November. He encouraged me to keep trying and told of similar

challenges he faced during his tenure as GPS Superintendent. There is no doubt Mr. Waggoner was looking down on us that next day with his pleasant smile.

You may have noticed recently that we released a timeline regarding the progression of the bond projects. Those estimates will no doubt require some modification along the way but our goal is to provide meaningful information for all district patrons. I've already said this many times, but we don't take lightly the trust shown to us by the voters.

Finally, I want to say best wishes to the GHS class of 2015. You have provided many memories to this community and now go forth while always continuing to learn. All in all, I'd say May was a pretty good month! Somewhere in the background you can almost hear the classic Alice Cooper song, "School's Out for Summer."