

A SUMMARY OF THE SEELEY LAKE HIGH SCHOOL PROPOSAL

The discussion of the proposed high school attendance center at Seeley Lake has brought out considerable mis-information, half truths, contradictory statements, etc. The following is presented in an attempt to clarify the conditions and facts that exist.

The Missoula County High School Board of Trustees voted, 4 to 2, to ask the voters of Missoula County for a sum of \$330,000, or approximately 11 mills of taxes to build an attendance center at Seeley Lake. The issue is to be placed on the ballot for the April school election. The 11 mills will be a one-shot deal, or a levy for one year only, to construct this school. 11 mills of taxes amount to \$1.10 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation, or if the average taxpayer in Missoula County has an assessed valuation of \$10,000, it will cost him \$11.00 one time only, to build this school. Since it is a special levy rather than a bond issue, the \$11.00 represents the total cost. There will be no interest, or for that matter, any further levy. The above costs are predicated on the fact that this school will have to be a complete 4 year term school, equipped with a gym, for Missoula to maintain it as an accredited educational center.

There is no existing law by which the federal government can absorb any appreciable amount of the cost of this school. The amount which could be received under existing laws would possibly equip and furnish the new buildings, but probably little more. There is no proposed law before congress at the present time, that would, or could, absorb any larger percentage of the cost of this building. The only action taken so far, are letters by Dr. Briggs of the County High School Board directed to Senators Mansfield and Metcalf, requesting legislation to help in these isolated areas. That is a long way from any federal aid that would absorb up to 100% of this building cost.

Some question has been raised in regard to adequate statistical information etc., being on hand at present in order to determine the efficacy of immediate action. Insofar as it being necessary for the High School Board to study this further, we would like to point out that this situation, and the need for a change, was first presented to the previous School Board. The Seeley Lake group met with the present Board in May of 1960 to present the facts to them and to ask their consideration. Nothing was done by the Board until December of 1960, when a committee was to obtain a formal report from Taylor and Bartron's Accounting and Educational Services. This report has been in the hands of the present Board since January 9, 1961. Any further information required is readily available at the acceptable sources, such as; County Superintendent of Schools; architectural advisors; local representatives of Federal agencies, and many others. It seems that anyone seriously interested in acquiring further information for a comprehensive study has certainly had time to do so since May of 1960, especially in view of the fact that all of this information is a matter of record and available, in Missoula, at any time. To arrive at a decision and attempt to gain an end in any project, a first determined step must be taken!

The Seeley Lake school bus actually makes a trip of 68 miles one way, or 136 miles round trip, each day to get these children to Missoula. That is the longest known school bus run in the United States. This bus is usually the first vehicle over the road, at least as far as the intersection with Route 20, in the mornings. The bus begins its run and picks up its first children at 6:00 A.M. and completes its run and lets off its last passengers at 6:15 P.M. These children are putting in 12 hours or more in school and bus ride, at a time when the 8 hour day and 40 hour week are well established working hours for adults!

It has been established as accurately as possible, that should a high school located in Seeley Lake exist tomorrow, we would have an immediate attendance of 75 pupils, and by projecting the attendance figures to the year 1963, there would be a pupil attendance figure surpassing the 100 mark. It would, therefore, seem imperative to plan a building for the future, to encompass an enrollment figure of 150 pupils. It might be appropriate to note that at the present time, business men in the Seeley Lake area seldom are able to hire a qualified man if he has children of high school age. When school facilities are provided, there is no doubt that a marked increase in attendance growth will be noted as these family men take jobs offered, and move in.

Insofar as area development being permanent is concerned, considering timber availability for the mills, this fact can be borne out by U.S. Forest Service, as they have set up their timber harvest on a 140 year rotation program, so that there will be an allowable cut of 23,000,000 feet per year - forever. Added to this, will be the cut on private lands that will be available from time to time. The 23,000,000 feet, incidentally, is on the Seeley Ranger District alone, so that the cut in the Swan Valley and adjoining districts will be supplemental to this amount. This stabilizes, beyond a doubt, the permanence of the lumber industry in this area. To further point out that our growth is permanent, we may refer to Forest Service figures regarding the increased use of the area for recreational purposes. According to these figures, there were 32,237 man days spent in recreation in 1950, and by 1959, this figure had increased to 119,990, or nearly 400% increase. With the completion of the highway through to Glacier Park, we can anticipate even more of an increase for the simple reason, as is evident, the facilities are unlimited. The fact that other businesses and agencies are aware of this growth, and convinced of its permanence, is borne out by the fact that the R.E.A. has recently purchased land, and at present, is building quite an extensive building to house the necessary offices and supplies to handle the volume of business now existing in the area. The Blackfoot Telephone Company has also purchased land, and is planning to build an exchange to handle the subscribers for the soon-to-be-established telephone lines. Each year brings a number of new houses and a business or two added to the community.

One fact of major importance that worries inhabitants of the Seeley Lake area, is the terrific drop-out rate that has been established by the children attempting to ride the bus. Results in the five years that the bus has operated, indicate that we can expect to lose 30% of our high school students in the freshman year; 50% to 60% by the end of their sophomore year; 60% to 75% by the end of their junior year; and 75% to 100% by the end of their senior year. When we realize that high school, under these conditions, demand that a child spend 12 hours or more per day in combination school and bus ride, in addition to whatever time is necessary for home study, and that they are unable to participate in any extra-curricular activities whatsoever, it is no wonder that many of them feel that they just don't have the physical and mental stamina to continue. It seems that in a democratic country where we believe in equal opportunity for all, that we should certainly believe in equal opportunity for education for all, and that it behooves us as parents, educators and just plain Americans to provide these facilities.

The plans that have been discussed, are merely a set of rough draft and cost estimates that were obtained by the high school committee of the Seeley Lake P.T.A. organization for the purpose of presenting the facts to interested parties, and calling the situation to the attention of the Missoula County High School Board. They are in no way binding upon anyone. The figure of \$330,000 was derived by the high school board after contacting a few informed parties as to the cost per foot anticipated to build a school building. The total figure was derived by applying this cost per foot to the recommended footage for a 150 pupil unit. The final decision as to plans, building materials, and costs in general, of course, lies with the high school board of trustees.

Qualification for Valid signatures on Petition
as per RCM 75-3908 (1224.8)

Signer must be registered elector (voter)
living in school district, who is a taxpayer
upon property therein & whose name is on
the last completed assessment roll for state,
county & school district taxes.

Sec. 23-1205. WHEN THE POLLS FOR SPECIAL ELECTIONS SHALL OPEN AND CLOSE.

Whenever any special election is held for the purpose of submitting to the qualified electors of any county /high school district, school district, city or town, the question of incurring an indebtedness for any purpose, issuing bonds or making a special or additional levy for any purpose, the polls shall be open at 12 o'clock noon and shall remain open until 8 o'clock p.m. of the same day; provided, that if any such election is held on the same day as any general county, school, or municipal election or any primary election and at the same polling places with the same judges and clerks of election, then the polls shall be opened and closed at the same hours as the polls for such general, county, school, municipal or primary elections.

Sec. 75-3802. NOTICE OF ELECTION. Where the question of making such additional levy is su submitted, notice thereof shall be given by posting the same at each school house in said district at least ten days before such election, or by publication thereof for a like period before such election in each newspaper published in said district, or by both such notice and publication.

(one other Section that may have some bearing):

75-4611. APPROVAL OF TAX OTHER SPECIAL LEVIES NOT SUBMITTED. In the event such additional levy is approved by a majority of all of the taxpayers voting at said election, no other special tax for the operation and maintenacne of the high school may ~~be~~ in the same year be submitted to a vote of the taxpayers within the local school district wherein such high school is situated.

(In other words the high school board will need to take into consideration this fact if it is going to need a special levy next spring (as it has the past couple of years) for addition~~s~~ to the general fund budget for the next school year (1961-1962) and make note of it in the publication of notices and on the ballot. thus

-%250,000 for building a high school plant at Seeley Lake (approximately 10 mills) and
- 75,000 (aproximately 3 mills) for the operation and maintenance of the general fund of the county high school

(If a special levy election is approved by the majority of voters who vote in the election, the levy is laid the next year after August 1st andd is for the purpose of allowing the county superintendent to figure it in setting the tax levy for the distrits and county high school.

(A bond election is an entirely different process. It takes petitioning, 40% of registered taxpayers must vote, the tax is spread over twenty year payments and such that it is not very wise to consider for such a small amount of money)

Qualification for Valid signatures on Petition
as per RCM 75-3908 (1224.8)

Signer must be registered elector (voter)
living in school district, who is a taxpayer
upon property therein & whose name is on
the last completed assessment roll for state,
county & school district taxes.

Sec. 23-1205. WHEN THE POLLS FOR SPECIAL ELECTIONS SHALL OPEN AND CLOSE.

Whenever any special election is held for the purpose of submitting to the qualified electors of any county /high school district, school district, city or town, the question of incurring an indebtedness for any purpose, issuing bonds or making a special or additional levy for any purpose, the polls shall be open at 12 o'clock noon and shall remain open until 8 o'clock p.m. of the same day; provided, that if any such election is held on the same day as any general county, school, or municipal election or any primary election and at the same polling places with the same judges and clerks of election, then the polls shall be opened and closed at the same hours as the polls for such general, county, school, municipal or primary elections.

Sec. 75-3802. NOTICE OF ELECTION. Where the question of making such additional levy is su submitted, notice thereof shall be given by posting the same at each school house in said district at least ten days before such election, or by publication thereof for a like period before such election in each newspaper published in said district, or by both such notice and publication.

(one other Section that may have some bearing):

75-4611. APPROVAL OF TAX OTHER SPECIAL LEVIES NOT SUBMITTED. In the event such additional levy is approved by a majority of all of the taxpayers voting at said election, no other special tax for the operation and maintenacne of the high school may ~~be~~ in the same year be submitted to a vote of the taxpayers within the local school district wherein such high school is situated.

(In other words the high school board will need to take into consideration this fact if it is going to need a special levy next spring (as it has the past couple of years) for addition~~s~~ to the general fund budget for the next school year (1961-1962) and make note of it in the publication of notices and on the ballot. thus

-%250,000 for building a high school plant at Seeley Lake (approximately 10 mills) and
- 75,000 (aproximately 3 mills) for the operation and maintenance of the general fund of the county high school

(If a special levy election is approved by the majority of voters who vote in the election, the levy is laid the next year after August 1st andd is for the purpose of allowing the county superintendent to figure it in setting the tax levy for the distrits and county high school.

(A bond election is an entirely different process. It takes petitioning, 40% of registered taxpayers must vote, the tax is spread over twenty year payments and such that it is not very wise to consider for such a small amount of money)

SCHOOL LAWS
OF THE
STATE OF MONTANA
1957

State Department of Public Instruction

CHAPTER 38

EXTRA TAXATION FOR SCHOOL PURPOSES

75-3801. DISTRICT SCHOOL TAXES * ELECTION(1) elem. school..

(2) Whenever the board of trustees of any district or county high school shall deem it necessary to raise money by taxation in excess of the levy required to meet its foundation program and approved additions thereto within the limitations hereinbefore specified (permissive 2% increase for h.s. budget - see (1) for the purpose of maintaining the high schools of said district or the county high school, or building, altering, repairing or enlarging any school house or houses of such district or county high school, for furnishing additional school facilities for said district, or county high school, or for any other purpose necessary for the proper operation and maintenance of the schools of said district, or county high school, said board of trustees shall determine and fix the amount necessary and required for such purpose or purposes in addition to any other legal levies on the district, including the approved addition to its foundation program hereinbefore provided for, and in the case of the district high school.. (qualifications of voters in district).. ...In the case of the county high school the board shall submit the question of an additional levy to raise said amount to the qualified electors residing within the county, exclusive of those residing within any district maintaining a district high school in the county (Frenchtown, and Joint district of Arlee, Alberton, and Florence-Garleton) who are taxpayers and whose names appear on the last completed assessment roll of the county for state, county and school taxes, either at the regular annual elections held in said districts, or special elections called for that purpose by the board of trustees of said county high school. Such elections shall be called by resolution in the same manner as provided for other school elections (see Sec. 75-3802 and 23-1203 below), and shall be held prior to August first; (in order to be included in the budget for the forthcoming school year which has been adopted just after July 1 of the current year) and provided, further, that the provisions of this act shall not prevent the voting of a special levy on a high school district as provided for in Chapter 130, Laws, 1949 (75-4609).

*(This section applies to district high schools rather than county high school which we are yet- the case has been appealed to the Supreme Court as you know and we remain a county high school here in Missoula until that court has decided the case. Until then Section 75-4609 does not apply to us. Note the incumbrances of it if we become a district high school.. The board of trustees of the local district wherein the high school is located..shall call together a meeting with the chairmen of all the boards of trustees of the common (elementary) school districts ~~XXXXXXX~~ served by the high school.. to consider calling an election (special levy) for the high school... If a majority of the board of trustees of the high school district and designated representatives of the common ~~XXXXXXX/XXXXXXX~~ (elementary) school districts attending the meeting shall determine that the proposed expenditures are necessary..then the high school board of trustees shall call an election ... and if approved by a majority of the taxpayers voting in the election.. then the levy will be made on all property within said high school district.)