

Greeley County Republican

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**Proponent Testimony on SB 2
For the Senate Ways & Means Committee
Submitted by Christy Hopkins
February 11, 2025**

Dear Chairman Billinger and members of the committee:

My name is Christy Hopkins. I am the owner and editor of the Greeley County Republican, Greeley County's sole newspaper.

On May 22, 2024, 36% of the registered voters of Greeley County participated in a special election to determine whether USD 200, Greeley County Schools, should expend \$4.6 million in taxpayer funds. This would enable the district to build a second gymnasium with handicapped accessible locker rooms and construct a handicapped-accessible playground.

Today, we should be watching as interior work on that new gym proceeds. Kids should be bundling up to play together on a playground that blends modern, accessible equipment with a safe, solid surface that allows our wheelchair bound youth the ability to play safely with their peers.

Instead, we are here, asking you to enable our county to utilize the funds our voters approved in a fair, legal, binding election.

We are here because Greeley County does not have an official government website. A 2023 change in statute requires legal notices to be posted to a site, which in our case, does not exist. I cannot imagine the public was out searching for a website that does not exist to find legal notices. That is not how our community gets its news.

Before I bought the newspaper in 2022, I was the community development director here for 17 years. The Greeley County Republican and the way it tells our community's story was a large part of why I purchased the paper. When the previous editors looked to retire, I knew that someone had to carry on this tradition.

It is now my job to tell the story of our community. That's why we did more than publish the required legal notices. Here is a list of information published in the Greeley County Republican leading up to the May 22, 2024 bond election:

March 13, 2024: Legal Notice of Intent to file an Application for Permission to Vote and Issue School Bonds and Issue School Bonds in Excess of the District's General Bond Debt Limitation

March 20, 2024: Front page story with architectural diagram and playground schematic entitled “Election scheduled to vote on rolling over bond for second gym, new playground at Greeley County Schools”

March 27, 2024: Greeley County School Bond Questions & Answers, Letter to the Editor entitled “Is the new gym an effective use of our taxes?” from Mark Kleymann

April 3, 2024: Letter to the Community “School Bond Issue” from Superintendent John Niehues with a QR code to a 19-page Questions & Answers document on Greeley County Schools’ website; Legal Notice of Bond Election

April 10, 2024: Legal Notice of Bond Election

April 17, 2024: Front page story “Senior Center hosts carry-in dinner Q & A session about school bond project,” Letter to the Editor in support of bond from Todd Schmidt, Legal notice of places and dates for registration for school bond election

May 1, 2024: Front page notice “Greeley County Schools to host Bond Information Session and Forum May 8,” School bond information forum ad

May 8, 2024: Front page notice “Greeley County Schools to host Bond Information Session and Forum May 8,” School bond information forum ad

May 15, 2024: Front page story and photo “School hosts informational session and forum ahead of May 21 election,” ½ page ad (paid for by project supporters) encouraging residents to vote yes

May 28, 2024: Front page photo and story “School bond election results”

We publish weekly on Wednesdays and have a print subscriber base of 530, with another 40 digital-only subscribers. Copies are also available for purchase at three Greeley County businesses. The most recent American Community Survey data says there are 404 households in Greeley County. We do not reach them all, as some subscribers are outside the community. Still, the paper has a significant reach.

Additionally, legal notices posted in the paper are posted to our website, www.gcrnews.com. These are accessible outside the subscriber paywall to ensure that everyone has access to the notices. The notice in question appeared on our website on April 3, 2024 and remains there today.

I ask you to advance Senate Bill 2, which will enable Greeley County to move forward with the project voters approved. I appreciate your time today and am happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

Christy Hopkins

Christy Hopkins, owner and editor
Greeley County Republican