

Issue 11 – Questions / Answers

Q: What is Issue 11?

A: Issue 11 is a 3.0-mill bond issue to fund the construction of one new elementary school building to replace the three current elementary schools. The bond will raise \$15 million in principal and approximately \$6 million in interest over the next 20 years to pay for our local share of the construction, furnishing, and equipping costs for a new school building.

Q: Why is this on the ballot? What is wrong with the current schools?

A: Our current elementary schools have major, unsolvable physical problems linked to their age. At an average of 65 years old, the cost to operate, maintain and repair these buildings just continues to rise. We have a great opportunity now, as the State of Ohio is offering us approximately \$14 million for construction (nearly half the cost) through the Ohio Facility Construction Commission (OFCC) program.

Q: Why not just repair or renovate our current elementary schools? How much would that cost?

A: Renovating our current buildings to state minimum standards would cost almost more than the cost to build a new school. The State of Ohio recommends that school buildings be replaced when the cost of renovation exceeds 66% of the cost to build new.

Q: What are the most crucial repairs that the elementary schools need?

A: The most pressing needs across these buildings are renovations of the roofs, asbestos removal, electrical and heating system updates. Just bringing these up to minimum state standards would cost us at least \$9.2 million. This includes \$2.6 million at Washington Elementary, \$3.6 million at Lexington Elementary, and \$3.0 million at Marlboro Elementary.

Q: How did the buildings get in these conditions?

A: These buildings have foundational issues that are beyond what can be repaired, despite years of excellent service to our kids and community and great work by our custodial and maintenance staff. The biggest problem is that these buildings were built in the 1950s, and have seriously outdated infrastructure (HVAC, asbestos, roofing, plumbing, electrical) which is costly to maintain and cannot meet today's educational needs.

Q: Once Issue 11 passes, will we still be the lowest taxed district in Stark County?

A: Yes! We are the lowest taxed school district in Stark County, and we take great pride in our efficiency and smart financial management of taxpayer dollars. When Issue 11 is approved on May 2nd, we will remain the lowest taxed district in Stark County.

Q: How much will Issue 11 cost?

A: Once approved, the bond issue will cost on average, less than \$10 per month per \$100,000 of home value. The total construction cost of the project is about \$29 million. The State of Ohio will pay around \$14 million (48% of the cost), while this bond supplies our local share over its 20-year duration.

Q: What happens if the Issue 11 fails?

A: Our students and community will lose out on modern classrooms in a new, efficient building. Our major facility needs will continue indefinitely, and we may be forced to seek additional money to fund ongoing 'band-aid' repairs. We will also lose out on the OFCC's offer to fund \$14 million for construction – and there is no guarantee they will offer us this much money again.

Q: How does Issue 11 save us money? How much will we save?

A: By consolidating three elementary schools into one new building, we will eventually save over \$500,000 every year in our operating fund. The district will save money by reducing annual costs in emergency repairs and through academic and operational services. Any staff reductions will happen naturally through retirements and voluntary resignations.

Q: Will average class sizes go up?

A: No. Based on district enrollment projections, the average elementary class size is not projected to increase. While the new up-to-date classrooms will be physically larger and have more space, the average number of students in each class should remain steady.

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Q: When will construction begin? When would the new school open?

A: The total process will take up to 30 months. Once approved on May 2nd, the district would work with our community stakeholders and the OFCC to start the design and pre-construction planning process. We are aiming for Fall 2020 grand opening for the new elementary school.

Q: Where would the new elementary school be located?

A: The new elementary school would be located on the current Marlinton campus which houses the middle school and high school. The buildings will remain physically separated, ensuring elementary students stay at the new elementary building.

Q: What is the academic impact of a new, single elementary school?

A: The current buildings are well below today's educational standards – our classrooms are undersized and lack space for student intervention. Students become distracted in classrooms that are unbearably hot, freezing cold, and constantly leaking. Additionally, our three elementaries share important support staff, meaning many students lack daily access to the psychologists, counselors, and physical and speech therapists they need. Right now, these professionals shuttle between buildings, meaning students and teachers only see them once or twice a week at best.

Q: How will this impact the operating budget? Will you need another levy for operating?

A: Currently, the district has an \$8 million carryover cash balance in the Operating Fund. The carryover cash balance is forecasted to be spent down every year and is predicted to be \$2.5 million by 2021 in our May 2017 Five-Year Forecast. Regardless of the passage or failure of Issue 11, we do not expect at this time to pursue new operating funds unless there is a drastic change to state or local funding. With proper management, we can yield savings of up to \$500,000 in salaries and benefits from retirements by consolidating down to one elementary school, which will help us prolong a request for new operating funds. While we do have significant facility needs in all of our school buildings, particularly the high school, we have no plans to be on the ballot for new operating dollars anytime soon.

Q: What impact will this have on district bussing?

A: The goal of the school board and administration is to ensure that the student average ride time is no more than 5 minutes more than current average ride times. There are major route advantages and logistical benefits to bussing our students to a single campus.

Q: How is Issue 11 different than the previous bond issues in 2012/2013?

A: Unlike previous issues, Issue 11 is only for the construction of one new consolidated elementary school. The 2012 issue would have built three new buildings – one elementary school, one middle school, one high school, and the 2013 issue was a bond issue for a new high school alone.

Q: What is the difference between a bond issue and an operating levy?

A: By law, bond issue money can only pay for capital costs like building construction, renovations and major equipment purchases. Operating money primarily pays for day-to-day operating costs, such as instructional resources, salaries, benefits, and utilities. All of the funds from Issue 11 are for one consolidated elementary. No Issue 11 funds can be used for operating costs, salaries or benefits.

Q: Why is Issue 11 a property tax instead of an income tax?

A: After much research and discussion, the Board of Education concluded that a property tax at less than \$10 per month per \$100,000 of home value was the most cost effective way to fund the construction of a new school. With the state paying 48% of the construction cost, a 3.0 mill bond issue will fund the remaining local portion of the plan. Property Tax is the most common and most widely understood vehicle used by many school districts in Ohio to raise funds for new school buildings. About 12% of our taxpayers own agriculture property and receive CAUV adjusted, lower tax rate.

To find out more about the impact on your taxes, visit the office of Stark County Auditor's website:

www.starkcountyohio.gov