

Frequently Asked Questions Montabella Bond Proposal 2018

The following is a list of **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)** and factual information regarding our District Facilities and our upcoming Bond proposal on May 8, 2018.

If you have a question that is not addressed here, please contact Superintendent Shelly Millis at (989) 427-5148 to have your question answered.

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1. Why are we considering a bond issue now?

Through the Board of Education's Planning process, a facility needs assessment, and community and staff input throughout 2017; it was determined that we have several facility & site needs that cannot be addressed through current funding alone. We also set an early goal to **not increase the tax millage rate**. We are not asking for an increase.

2. Have you asked voters in our community to comment on this bond issue?

We are. A community wide survey was completed in November 2017. A copy of that is also available for your review on the district website under the bond resources. The results of this survey were very encouraging in regards to the communities support of improvements to our school facilities.

3. When was the Facility Needs Assessment completed and what did it say?

The Facility Needs Assessment was professionally compiled by the construction management firm The Christman Co. and validated by architectural firm Tower Pinkster, during 2017. It examined district owned buildings and grounds regarding items related to safety & security, accessibility, structural, electrical,

exterior & interior conditions, mechanical (heating/cooling/plumbing), and general site items.

The Facilities Needs Assessment recommended several maintenance and facility upgrades. The highest needs were narrowed down to items that need to be addressed in the next 1 to 5 years.

4. Why have a bond vote now?

- Due to some of our debt being paid off, we can provide site & facility improvements and not increase the millage rate.
- The facility assessment provides a master plan for replacement of our current infrastructure. The total list of needs is approximately \$30 million but we are only asking voters to help us with our most pressing needs.
- Our maintenance staff has done a great job in maintaining our buildings using our sinking fund and operational budget; however we cannot continue to fund large capital improvement projects out of our general fund budget, without negatively affecting our current programs.
- Many large or expensive maintenance projects are due to be addressed now or very soon.

5. What is the financial impact to homeowners with this bond proposal?

This bond vote would result in a zero millage increase for our citizens. The current millage rate of 5.42 will be maintained for the life of the bond.

6. Would our taxes go down if this bond proposal is voted down?

All previous bond issues in the district have their own pay-off schedule through Michigan's School Bond Loan Fund, these are scheduled to be paid off in 2020. The bond rate is calculated each year to ensure that the district is collecting only the necessary funds needed to make the bond payment. It is possible that the rate could go down slightly if the bond is not passed but those are only predictions at this time until official taxable value updates have been made.

7. What does this bond proposal include?

The School Board determined at its November 2, 2017 meeting to place this proposal on the May 8, 2018 ballot. Some highlights of this Proposal include:

- Major infrastructure upgrades to both schools including parking lots and driveways, roofing, and mechanical / electrical improvements.
- Security vestibules at both of our buildings.

- Elementary improvements include: new, larger classrooms with updated technology and furnishings.
- An additional gym for physical education classes and practice space.
- Additions of a new fitness room, band and building storage, toilet rooms and central office.
- A \$21,400,000 bond request for a zero mill increase.
- Visit our website for a bond brochure and a complete listing of all the projects.

8. Who was involved in determining what to include?

Initially we started with our own internal list and combined it with the Facility Needs Assessment, a Public Forum and staff interviews to review and prioritize the potential scope of our needs.

Specifically for the May 8, 2018 bond proposal, the School Board, Superintendent, staff and community input determined that this proposal be recommended. The items included at this time will address our most pressing needs and will not hamper future decisions.

9. Is our enrollment growing or declining?

The district hired Stanfred Consultants to provide the enrollment projections to be included in our application to the Michigan Department of Treasury. The district's official fall count for 2018 was 783 students which would make the Stanfred Consultants prediction in 2023 at 745 students, a 5% decline.

Despite the fact that we are declining in enrollment, our facilities still be need to be maintained.

10. Will there be an increase in student capacity of our buildings with the addition?

Most of our current elementary classrooms are undersized. There is an increase in square footage planned in the proposal, however the number of classrooms remain the same as the current setup. The size of the classrooms at the elementary will be expanded so the individual classroom size will increase but the overall capacity for students in the building remains the same. Our enrollment is projected to decrease slightly over the next 5 years.

11. How will technology needs be addressed through this bond?

There is \$900,000 included in technology improvements throughout the district. We have been managing to provide a high level of technology education and this bond issue will directly impact students in this regard.

12. Will local contractors have a chance to bid on the project?

Yes!! The bidding process has not taken place yet. If the bond passes, then more detailed architectural drawings will be produced. The district will then release request for bids for each area of work (electrical, plumbing, general contractor, etc.). Any qualified company that wishes to bid out the project will have that opportunity. Local companies can contact the district and ask to be added to the bid list at anytime to ensure that they are made aware of the request for bids.

13. What safeguards will be in place to ensure that subcontractors are qualified for the project?

The requirements for submitting a bid include bonds, liability insurance and references. In addition there will be research completed on the safety records of all bidders. All of these factors will be considered and reported to the board of education for when they make the decision to approve a company for the bid.

14. What happens if the bids come in better or worse than what is budgeted?

The district can only collect from tax payers the amount that is listed in the ballot language, therefore we must stay within that budget. If bids come in over what is planned, then changes or reductions must be made to the plan so that the spending stays within the approved limit. If bids were to come in better, then other needs could be addressed as long as those needs fall within what was listed in the ballot language. For example, the district could not decide to purchase a bus with bond money since that is not listed in the ballot language.

15. What projects specifically address safety and security?

Both buildings will receive secured entrances. The entrances will be monitored so that every visitor coming through the main entrances during school hours will be routed through the office and in front of a staff member before entering the building. The two buildings will be connected with a corridor allowing for students that move back and forth between the two buildings to do so in a secure setting. This reduces the number of times that exterior doors are open which reduces the opportunities for visitors to access the buildings without going through the main entrance. The bus pick up area and the playground will switch positions.

Currently the bus pick up area is closest to the elementary building causing students to go through that area in order to access the playground.

16. When will the secure entrances be addressed?

Secure entrances at both buildings will be addressed in the first phase, which will begin in spring of 2019. The elementary office will have renovations during both the first and second phase. Initially during phase one the secure entrances will be established along with the reception area. Phase two will address the remaining spaces in the office (work room, ancillary staff offices, etc.).

17. If all the buildings are connected, doesn't that increase the risk of all students if an intruder gets inside of the school?

The enhancements in technology that are part of the bond will allow for parts of the buildings to be locked down in the event of an emergency. With the touch of a button interior doors could be shut and locked which would isolate any area or restrict movement from one area to another. The access could also be restricted throughout the school day to reduce the traffic through the corridor where classrooms will be located.

18. Is natural light that important to have for students in all classrooms?

Yes, there are huge academic and social benefits. There are a number of research studies that show that natural daylight actually increases test scores of students. Elementary students spend the majority of their day in their homeroom class, which means some students are spending the majority of their day in an environment where they are without daylight.

Studies about the impact of natural light on student performance can be found on our website, www.montabella.com under the bond resources.

19. What is the rationale for an additional gym at the elementary?

There are two main reasons for the need of an additional gym: increased allowable activities for elementary physical education classes and additional practice space for extra curricular activities. Currently our elementary physical education classes are conducted in our competition gym, which means that certain activities are limited to preserve the surface. Activities like scooters and floor hockey have been restricted in the past. The two current gyms are used after school for a variety of different sport teams and other activities. Preference

is given for practice times and games for school sponsored activities which means that our youth activities are the ones that get the latest times. Our youngest students have practice times as late as 9pm on weekdays; which is not ideal for their learning the following day.

20. What is the School District doing to maintain our buildings?

Our maintenance staff has done an excellent job maintaining our facilities, but some of our equipment is at the end of its useful life. The oldest classrooms in our elementary school are small, windowless and don't meet the new air quality standards. Our sinking fund has helped to maintain our systems, but we are at the point now where more costly items need to be replaced.

21. The community currently pays mileage on a sinking fund (maintenance millage), why can't these issues be addressed through that funding?

The district is fortunate that we have had a sinking fund for several years. This fund is dedicated specifically to address maintenance needs. The fund brings in about \$300,000 a year and has been extremely beneficial when we have needed to replace boilers, drain fields or other high expense systems. Many of our current mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems at the elementary school are aging and at the end of their useful life. This fund can not provide enough funds to cover all of the replacement costs that are needed. For example, our current roof replacement will cost \$1,000,000 so no other needs could be addressed for over a 3 year period.

22. Do the funds from the sinking fund carry over if not used from year to year?

Yes, the sinking fund revenues are housed in a separate account. Those funds stay exclusively in that account and are only available for projects that are an approved purchase for a sinking fund. That account could add up over a number of years and be used on a larger project that was allowable out of the sinking fund. The sinking fund brings in about \$300,000 each year.

23. What is meant by 21st century classroom or learning?

The basic definition is a classroom that better prepares students of today for their future. There are many different visions for what that looks like. Our vision for these classrooms is flexibility. Technology that is available for teachers as a tool when needed, furniture that can allow for individual work, partner work and group work. The furniture has to have the ability to be mobile or flexible so that all of those different types of learning can be accomplished.

24. When is the last day to register to vote, and where and how does a person get registered?

The deadline to register in time for the May 8, 2018 election is April 5, 2018 (at least 30 days prior to the election). Registering to vote may be done through any Secretary of State office or with your city or township clerk. Visit the Secretary of State's Michigan Voter Information Center website at <https://webapps.sos.state.mi.us/MVIC/> for more information about registering to vote and absentee ballots.

25. Why do you believe that this is an "investment" in our students and community?

Our public schools are a joint responsibility for all citizens in our society. Most communities are known by the quality of their schools and facilities. Quality school facilities can be a positive factor in attracting and retaining families. Homes are generally more desirable in a school district that provides quality education and a variety of fine arts, technical, vocational, and athletic programs.

We believe that parents and citizens desire a strong public education for their children. Past generations in our communities have provided for the needs of our schools over the decades. This is our opportunity to extend that legacy of a high quality education at Montabella Community Schools for future generations.