

July 6, 2010

Athens Area Schools – August 2010 BOND ISSUE – Frequently Asked Questions

1. How much will this bond proposal cost?

This bond issue will **NOT** increase the current tax millage (mills). The Bond Issue ballot will ask you to approve one proposal for \$2,850,000 for an additional five years.

2. Why is this vote important?

- Provides a structured and phased approach to long-term facility needs at our facilities.
- Renovates high school mechanical and electrical systems which will reduce energy use and allow more general fund dollars to be directed toward the classroom.
- Upgrades our technology systems and improves student technology access.
- Replaces two buses in our aging transportation fleet.
- Provides needed improvements to our Elementary and High school buildings that will better accommodate the restructuring effort following the building consolidations taking place in the fall of 2010.

3. How much planning has gone into this proposal?

The School Board hired TowerPinkster Architects & Engineers to assist us with a facilities study and community input process. In February of 2010, a group of Architects and Engineers toured our facilities and produced a comprehensive facility assessment of our buildings. This document was used to make decisions regarding the highest priority needs in our district. The High School was identified as having the greatest overall needs.

After that, a community-based committee of approximately 25 people was formed to discuss several options along with a building committee of the School Board. The strongest concepts were then presented at three community forums for input and refinement. In addition, TowerPinkster employees met with representative staff groups on March 12, 2010 to obtain their insights.

Based on all of this input a two phased implementation approach was adopted so that there would be **no additional millage impact** on voters. The School Board is recommending a five year bond extension to address our most pressing needs.

4. Are there educational benefits to passing this bond issue?

Yes. There are a variety of safety and security improvements, technology upgrades, mechanical and electrical improvements and site enhancements. This bond provides much needed improvements to the High School facility along with two new classrooms and a music room.

5. **What major issues will be addressed in this Bond Issue?**

- **Safety & Security**

The High School will receive new parking lot lighting, emergency lighting improvements and a new fire alarm system.

- **Operations & Maintenance**

With dwindling operations budgets, we will be able to address items at the high school such as: sidewalk connections to the Village sidewalks, a new building sign, additional barrier free toilets, replacement of selected windows, asbestos floor tile removal and replacement with new flooring, new fire alarm system, replacement of old steam heating system with new hot water system, replacement of original heating units, replacement of gym heating units, replace drinking fountains, upgrade main electrical service and obsolete electrical panels, provide parking lot lighting and upgrades to the emergency lighting. We will also be receiving two new classrooms, a new music room and corridor circulation space.

- **Technology Improvements**

The High School and East Leroy Elementary School will receive technology updates and improvements. Meetings with the community and staff identified the greatest need to be additional classroom technology. Approximately \$200,000 has been allocated for technology improvements in this bond issue.

- **Energy Savings**

Upgraded heating controls, new heating equipment and selected window replacement will improve comfort and reduce lost energy. This will help protect our operational budget.

- **Transportation**

Two new buses will be added to replace our oldest buses.

- **Consolidation & Efficiency**

Approval of this Bond Issue will assist our efforts to consolidate our buildings and reduce our overhead costs, while allowing options for our future. The middle school building will be maintained as a community center and sports practice facility and can be utilized as a school building again in the future as our enrollments being to increase.

6. **What will happen to middle school students?**

With decreasing enrollment, there is capacity at East Leroy Elementary school to accommodate the fifth grade students. Two new 6th grade classrooms will be added to the High School Building to create a new 6-8 wing. A much needed shared music room will also be added for all 6-12 students.

7. **What will you do with the middle school building?** The gymnasium will remain in use for middle school athletics and high school practices, as well as summer sports camps and other community activities. Band, journalism, and computer classes will operate in this building for the 2010-11 school year. This building will continue to provide us with options in the future, including possible lease arrangements with community organizations and remaining available to house possible future growth.

8. **Why do you need to pass a bond issue with decreasing enrollments?**
Our district buildings are aging and the reduction of operating revenue from the State does not adequately cover the costs of education, let alone building improvements. This Bond Extension proposal will free up general fund dollars for classroom use. The district enrollment is too small to efficiently operate three buildings, but too large to adequately house students in two buildings; without an addition.

9. **How soon will the improvements be completed?**
Building improvements would be implemented prior to the fall 2011 semester.

10. **Would spending cuts at the State level affect the funding of our project?**
No. Funding from the State of Michigan is based on student population counts and is reserved for operational costs only, not capital improvements. A Bond Issue can only be used for capital improvements to buildings, sites, equipment and technology and is independent of our student funding from the State. Bond issue funds cannot be used for operational expenses or teacher salaries.