

Frequently Asked Questions

updated July 28, 2017

Q. Why are we having a School Bond referendum now and how did we get here?

- During the past few years, the Exira-Elk Horn-Kimballton Community School District (CSD) has focused on paying off past debt, maintaining facilities, and reducing operational costs.
- After staff salaries/benefits, facility operational costs are the largest expense.
- The school district currently maintains 2 campus locations that are 10 miles apart.
- Portions of both school buildings were constructed in the 1950s and several original building systems are still in use; including: HVAC equipment, doors, windows, electrical, parking lots and sidewalks.
- In late 2016, the school board asked independent consultants to conduct facility condition assessments at the Elk Horn and Exira school buildings. Visual, non-destructive inspections identified existing conditions and provided estimated costs to perform the necessary maintenance, repairs and renovations to improve school buildings and grounds.
- May 2017 the school district hired an Architect-Engineering firm to assess current facilities and develop likely cost options.
- June 2017 the school board prioritized Capital Maintenance needs and reviewed the most recent opinion of probable costs needed to complete several proposed projects.
- July 2107 the Exira-EHK CSD board called for a referendum seeking \$3.9 million General Obligation bond funding to complete multiple projects at both school campus locations.

Q. What are the risks of doing nothing?

- First, the district faces a serious challenge with the existing boiler in the Elk Horn 1958 building section. This unit must be replaced, since it is difficult to find parts to repair this equipment. If something breaks and requires emergency repair this unpredictable timing and cost could be extremely expensive. That General Fund expense would take money away from our students' quality of education.
- Second, we believe interest rates and construction costs will likely rise, making these identified Capital Maintenance projects more expensive in the future.
- Third, the district needs voter approval to access low interest (3.25%) bond rates , which saves taxpayers money now and in the future. We don't believe these low interest bond markets will be available forever.
- Finally – and most importantly – if we do nothing, current and future students will not enjoy the benefits provided by these proposed improvements.

Q. What projects are being proposed?

ELK HORN SCHOOL CAMPUS

- New Energy Efficient Windows (1954/61 Areas)
- New Energy Efficient HVAC (1954/61 Areas)
- Secure Entrance Doors / Access Control
- New Boiler & Cooling Tower (1978 Area)
- New Concessions and Restrooms (Baseball Field)
- New LED Lighting (Baseball Field)

EXIRA SCHOOL CAMPUS

- New Energy Efficient Windows (1958 Areas)
- Energy Efficient HVAC Improvements (1958 Areas)
- Secure Entrance Doors / Access Control
- Convert FACS to Pre-K classroom
- Repair/Replace North Entrance Drive and Parking
- New Play Areas and Playground Equipment
- Replace South Drop-Off and Parking Areas
- Replace/Expand East Bleachers (Football Field)
- New LED Lights (Football Field)

Q. Why haven't these Capital Maintenance improvement been made before now?

- The E-EHK school district invests thousands of dollars every year to maintain two school facilities. This includes repair, replacement and day-to-day items such as light bulbs and floor care.
- Both original 1950s buildings now require a significant amount of capital maintenance.
- The School District prioritizes maintenance needs, and has done many things in recent years, including:

Elk Horn Campus

- *Elementary/Library carpet*
- *Parking lot security cameras*
- *Baseball scoreboard*
- *New roof sections*

BOTH Campus Locations

- *New telephone systems*
- *Building signs*
- *Sidewalk updates*
- *Gym floor/wall painting*

Exira Campus

- *Replaced boiler in 2014*
- *Light ballast replacements*
- *New football concession stand/press box*
- *Football restroom upgrade*

- *Wireless Upgrades/Access points/servers*
- *Repairs/Replacements of HVAC systems*
- *Roofing*
- *Purchase School Buses & other vehicles*
- *Computers/Chromebooks for students & staff*

Q. What was the plan for E-EHK school building improvements during 2017 year/construction season?

Many projects are/were completed recently, including:

- EHK - Continued Roof replacements, new LED lighting throughout the building, Security Cameras inside
- Exira - Refinishing Commons Flooring
- Both - Repainting hallways, transportation & technology upgrades

Q. Will \$3,900,000 pay for all the improvements needed?

- The district will not have final costs until the proposed improvement projects are designed and bids submitted.
- We are working with experienced construction professionals to develop reasonable and likely projections for these anticipated costs.

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Q. How will the proposed projects affect our operating expenses?

- The proposed Capital Maintenance improvements replace an aged boiler – this will be an immediate upgrade and significantly reduce winter heating utility costs.
- The proposed projects also replace several original unit ventilators with new, more efficient models. All proposed athletic field lights will be LED which are more efficient and will provide better lighting quality for athletes and fans.

Q. What are the Educational Benefits of the proposed projects?

- Each school building will become more safe and secure, due to new Card Access Control system installed on exterior entries.
- Students and staff will be more comfortable in the older sections of both schools -- due to new windows installed and upgraded HVAC systems.
- Current FACS space will be re-purposed into a Pre-K classroom, increasing capacity and learning.
- New playground area/equipment will provide improved physical education for elementary students.

Q. The project is too expensive! Why are we spending so much? Why does it cost so much?

- The district focus is on reducing operational costs, while maintaining high-quality education.
- Designers proposed upgrading existing spaces, rather building new spaces.
- Designers are proposing similar finishes to what currently exists – which is serviceable, not extravagant.
- Construction costs tend to rise, so waiting to do something in the future will likely be more expensive.
- Despite the total cost of \$3.9 million, the resulting tax levy for the district will still be lower than neighboring school districts.

Q. How many years to pay off the bonds?

- 20 years, but bonds can be paid off early.

Q. What if the interest rates on the bonds are higher than planned?

- Higher interest rates will reduce the amount of funds available to spend on the project.
- The school is working with financial experts that specialize in school financing. They are assisting with developing a financial plan that is reasonable and prudent.
- The proposed \$3,900,000 project is based on selling 20-year bonds at 3.215% interest rate. Current bond market interest rates for 20-year bonds are actually in the 3.0% to 3.5% range.
- The 3.215% estimated rate was purposely chosen to be conservative and if rates are lower when bonds are sold, then their pay-off date may be earlier.

Below are recent 20-year school bond sales by other IA school districts and interest rates they received:

District	Date	Amount	Rate
New Hampton	05/01/2017	\$10,000,000	2.93%
Pekin	04/26/2017	\$5,500,000	2.95%

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Bondurant-Farrar	04/24/2017	\$9,665,000	2.93%
Pleasantville	04/11/2017	\$6,355,000	2.84%
East Buchanan	03/08/2017	\$6,500,000	2.87%

Q. What is our enrollment, and what is it expected to be in the future?

- Our enrollment has averaged 402 students the last 6 years, and in 2016/17 we had 387 students enrolled – PreK to 12th grade. We expect future enrollment to remain steady at about 385 students.

Iowa Department of Education Projected Enrollment vs. our Actual Enrollment at Exira-EHK CSD

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
	Enrollment										
Estimate								374	385	384	372
Actual	401	399	399	389	414	410	387				

Q. Will the project be up for public bid?

- Yes, the proposed projects not-to-exceed \$3,900,000 will be legally advertised and all construction work will be competitively bid.

Q. What is the timeline for the Project?

- With Voter approval on September 12, 2017 the proposed projects will proceed as follows:
 - Final Plans/Specifications for Bidding by Dec 2017
 - Competitive Bidding Jan/Feb 2017
 - Construction/Renovations Summer of 2018

Q. When and where will voting take place?

- Voting will take place on Tuesday September 12, 2017 from noon CDT to 8:00 pm CDT at
 - ✓ Elk Horn Town Hall located at 4212 Main Street in Elk Horn, IA
 - ✓ Exira Recreation Center located at 106 N Jefferson in Exira, IA

Q. Will early voting and absentee ballots be available?

Absentee Voting by Mail

- Registered voters may request an absentee ballot be sent to them by mail. You must complete an absentee ballot request form and return the original, signed form to your county auditor. The request form does not need to be witnessed or notarized.

Request Deadline

- The request form must be received in the county auditor’s office by 5 p.m. on the Friday before the election. If the request is received so late that is unlikely the absentee ballot can be returned by mail in time to be considered for counting, the county auditor will enclose a statement to that effect with the absentee ballot.

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Q. Who is eligible to vote?

- To vote in the election, you must be:
 - A US citizen
 - At least 18 years old on Election Day
 - A legal resident of the Exira-EHK Community School District for 30 days preceding the election
 - Valid identification will be required and could include a driver's license, non-driver's identification card, tribal government issued identification card, or student identification certificate.

Q. How can I find out more information?

- Please contact:
School Board Members:

Kevin Petersen	Terri Harris	Tom Benton
Tamie Fahn	Matt Jorgensen	Joel Schlueter
Ryan Wilson		

Trevor Miller, Superintendent of Exira-EHK Community School District, 712-764-4606

Exira-EHK Community School District website: www.exira-ehk.k12.ia.us

Exira-EHK Booster Club -- https://www.facebook.com/SpartanBC/?ref=py_c