

Galesburg-Augusta Community Schools November 2, 2021 Bond Proposal

Same project, less cost to taxpayers.

Q: *Why is the Galesburg-Augusta School Board placing the bond project on the November 2, 2021 ballot when the voters did not pass it in May?*

A: The needs represented in the bond project have not gone away. The proposal lost by three (3) votes. After the election, many community members attended the regular board meeting and felt strongly that we need to try again for the benefit of today's students and our future Rams.

Q: *What is included in the bond proposal and how much will it cost?*

A: The project remains exactly the same as the needs are exactly the same.

- **Additional classroom space at the Primary School means returning 4th grades to the PS and 8th grades to the MS. It will open space back up at the High School for needed programs:**
Space is maxed out at our Primary School due to necessary and additional programs being added over the past several years. By adding an additional wing on to the Primary which will house four 4th grade classrooms and a STEAM education classroom, we once again will be able to house our 8th graders back at the Middle School and our Primary will return to a PreK-4 building.
Currently the High School space is also maxed out keeping us from adding teachers and courses. Our very successful Robotics program is housed in a maintenance building.

Q: *Why has the price of the project gone up from \$14.9 million to \$16.5 million?*

A: The estimates have been updated to post-pandemic commercial building and labor costs. The good news is, the economy, both interest rates and property values have increased, thereby allowing us to pay for those inflationary increases without having to raise the mills levied compared to our request in May.

- The mills needed to pay for this project are estimated to be 6.7 as compared to 7.0 had it passed in May. There are two reasons for this: 1) we will be able to issue the bonds in two (2) series rather than all at once and 2) the taxable value of properties have grown at 3.15% over the 2020 value, allowing the district to pay off existing debt and future debt faster with less mills needing to be levied.
- The first year ONLY will be at 1.9 mills. This is simply due to the timing of when the first bond will be issued, which will be in February of 2022 but with a payment due in November, before the new millage rate will be levied at 6.7.
- All in all, for a property that has a market value of \$100,000 and a taxable value of \$50,000, the monthly increase in property taxes will be \$5 per month (\$60.00 per year). Property with market value of \$200,000 and taxable value of \$100,000, the increase is \$10.00 month.

Q: *What is STEM/STEAM education and why do we need specialized classrooms?*

A: The Building and refurbishing current space to add STEM/STEAM opportunities

- For three years, G-A has been adding STEM/STEAM courses K-12. This type of curriculum incorporates Science, Technology, Engineering and Math and Art. These programs are collaborative-based, group-oriented classes where projects are examined integrating all subject areas. Students examine real world problems and develop engineering process-focused solutions.
- The growth in the number of STEM related jobs are projected to outpace all other occupations in the next decade. The US Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that overall employment in the economy will grow about 7.4%, while STEM related fields will grow by 10.8%. STEM/STEAM college job holders earn between 20% and 30% more per hour than non-STEM employees. Unfortunately, in 2018, 2.4

million STEM jobs were projected to go unfilled across the U.S.! Kalamazoo County sees the same gap in graduates' training and open positions.

- Excitingly, G-A has a partnership with Eaton-Cummins in Galesburg to help us build our students' knowledge and experience with this growing field. Having the right facilities to grow more STEM/STEAM programming will help us ensure *all* students receive this education before graduation, keeping the world of possibilities open for each of them.

Q: *Is a multi-purpose instructional activity area at the High School really a need?*

A: Overwhelming, yes.

- We may be a small district, but our high school students still need experiential learning opportunities that increases their preparedness for life after graduation. Having the flexible space of a multi-purpose facility will allow our high school staff to add such things as: large group presentations related to health and safety, career and technical education options throughout the county, job fairs, college application/FAFSA nights, fine arts celebrations, large group projects, robotic competitions, music, speech, theatre, debate, and additional P.E. classes. We need space for indoor marching band practice, flag corp practice, sideline cheer and to start a competitive cheer program.
- It will also be available for after-school programming including various sports team practices such as wrestling and softball/baseball in early spring (allowing students to get home much earlier than currently), youth programs (4-H, boy/girl scouts, Girls on the Run, I Run Too, MYWAY), and space for our community to use as well. The value added to host more and/or larger sports tournaments will help raise much needed funds to provide ongoing support for these programs.

Q: *We have a football field. Is a new multi-purpose athletic facility just about competing with our neighboring schools:*

A: No. The multipurpose athletic facility will be small in scale but meet the facility needs for the district. It has been 20 years since G-A has had a suitable and safe track for hosting home meets. Our PE classes have never had a track for health and fitness since the new high school opened in 2004. Only tennis and softball/baseball fields were included.

- Currently our track and field middle school and high school students must travel to and use other school districts' tracks for both practice and for all meets. Without a new track facility, our students will not get the chance to practice their skills on a daily basis, reach their performance goals nor perform in front of their own community. Additionally, we do not get to take advantage of the income earnings potential from hosting home events--funds that could be used in our athletic and after-school programs for such things as school events and trips, uniforms, equipment, two-way bussing and participation fee relief.

Q: *Why can't we renovate the current athletic facility at the Primary School?*

A: The current facility has outlived its life expectancy.

- Community members volunteered their time and built that athletic facility at the old high school (now the Primary) back in 1971. When we asked for an assessment of what it would cost to bring that facility up to performance and ADA standards AND last well into the future, the price tag is approximately \$3.4 million.
- The site at the high school was created to support a new athletic facility. And it's not just for football. We have students who play soccer, perform in marching band, softball, tennis, baseball and who are required to take fitness and health in our PE classes. Currently there are no bathrooms outside for anyone's use and we must bus all our groups of students to the Primary on game days. Imagine loading up all our marching band equipment into a trailer, taking it to the old field, performing at half time and throughout the game, loading the equipment all back up, bussing band students back to the

High School and then unloading all the instruments again. Our students deserve to walk outside their band room and head onto the field! This facility will be utilized by all our high school students, many middle students and by community members who would like a safe place to walk.

Q: How will this bond help academic achievement at G-A?

A: Expanding and repurposing facilities, increasing the number of academic/athletic opportunities, offering increasing STEM/STEAM curriculum, flexible spacing for after-school student groups, has been shown to positively impact students' interest in learning, encouraging them to stay in school and graduate!

- By upgrading and improving the learning environment, our students will be better able to learn the skills needed to be successful adults in our communities. Researchers have followed adults who participated in high school after-school programming such as athletics. They found that those adults exhibit *goal setting, perseverance, communication skills and far greater confidence in themselves and their futures*. All G-A students deserve the opportunities to learn and master these life skills for their future success as community members and contributors to the world around them.

Q: Does G-A still have one of the lowest millage rates compared to other local districts?

A: Yes. At 5.5 mills we are second to the bottom. With an increase to 6.7 mills, we will still be in the bottom third for the number of mills levied.

DISTRICT	2015 DEBT MILLAGE	2020 DEBT MILLAGE
Lawton	9.10	9.60
Parchment*	9.59	9.01
Otsego*	7.50	8.49
Kalamazoo	6.95	8.20
Paw Paw	8.20	8.20
Portage*	5.80	7.35
Climax-Scotts	7.20	7.30
Plainwell	7.46	7.28
Mattawan	7.24	7.00
Schoolcraft	7.50	7.00
Vicksburg	6.85	6.60
Gull Lake*	4.82	6.31
Colon	5.60	5.60
Galesburg-Augusta	6.28	5.50
Comstock	5.00	5.00
Median	7.2	7.28
Mean	7.06	7.23



Q: Are there still buses in the bond project?

A: Yes. Our bus fleet is an aging fleet that requires increasing and costly repairs to keep them safely on the road.

- School buses are expensive, approximately \$100,000 per bus. The district has purchased one new bus annually for the past few years. However, the fleet still has an average age over 11 years with high mileage rates--an average of over 121,000 miles. From an operations standpoint, it costs significantly more to maintain older, high-mileage vehicles. Utilizing bond funds to purchase three buses eliminates a significant impact (approximately \$300,000), thereby leaving those funds for instruction and the operations of the district. It is important to point out that state statute requires us to pay back enough principal on the bonds to more than cover the cost of buses within a standard useful-life period.

