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A Message from the Interim Superintendent & Board of Education President

School Election Overview

Dear Forest Hills Voter:

You will soon receive an absentee ballot to vote in the November 7, 2023, election. Forest Hills Public Schools has two items on the November ballot: a bond proposal and an operating millage proposal. This letter is intended to provide you with more details about the two requests.

First, let's explore the bond proposal. Forest Hills Public Schools is asking voters to consider a \$340 million proposal that would fund capital improvements through 2031. If approved, there is expected to be no tax rate increase from the current rate. This bond proposal has three key components. First, it is designed to modernize learning spaces and continue to create flexible and dynamic learning environments, modernize classrooms, and add accessible playground equipment. Second, it would improve additional district facilities. This would include building a new aquatic center to replace the aging community pool, expanding athletic facilities at all three high schools, updating the Fine Arts Center, and updating the Community Center. Third, the bond would also address aging systems and, if approved, would allow the district to replace systems at the end of their life cycle, like buses, heating and cooling systems, parking lots, roofing, and security systems. Again, if the bond is approved, there is expected to be no tax rate increase from the current rate.

The second item on November's ballot is an operating millage request. An operating millage is a component of a school's Foundation Allowance, which is a school district's largest source of funding for operations. We are asking our voters to consider a .50 mill tax increase for our operating millage for the 2024 and 2025 years. This tax is levied on non-homestead properties. Non-homestead properties represent industrial, commercial, and some agricultural properties as well as second homes. It does not include a family's primary residence.

In regard to the operating millage, the state government assumes school districts are levying 18 mills on non-homestead property when they calculate the amount of state funds a public school district receives. If property tax value growth is greater than the rate of inflation, school districts are required to "roll back" the number of mills they levy. Put in simple terms, currently FHPS is not allowed to levy the full 18 mills the state assumes we are levying, resulting in lost revenue every year. If the operating millage is approved, we estimate the increase will generate \$395,000 in additional operating revenue in 2024.

Bonds and operating millages are two different sources of revenue for schools. A bond proposal is how a public school district asks its community for authorization to borrow money to pay for capital improvements. Funds raised through the sale of bonds cannot be used for operational expenses such as employee salaries and benefits, school supplies, or textbooks. Bond funds must be kept separate and are audited by an independent auditing firm.

Additional information is available on the district website to inform and educate our community about this election. We encourage you to visit our website, www.fhps.net, or call our administration office at (616) 493-8800 if you have additional questions.

Sincerely,

Sara Magaña Shubel, Ph.D.
 Interim Superintendent

Kristen Fauson, Ph.D.
 Board of Education President

Please vote by
NOVEMBER 7



**November 7, 2023 Election Information
 Bond Proposal & Operating Millage Proposal**



**FOREST HILLS
 PUBLIC SCHOOLS**
 Cultivating Possibility



Bond Proposal

Bond Proposal Ballot Language

Shall Forest Hills Public Schools, Kent County, Michigan, borrow the sum of not to exceed Three Hundred Forty Million Dollars (\$340,000,000) and issue its general obligation unlimited tax bonds therefor, in one or more series, for the purpose of:

remodeling, equipping and re-equipping and furnishing and refurbishing school buildings; erecting, furnishing and equipping additions to school buildings; acquiring, installing and equipping or re-equipping school buildings for instructional technology; purchasing school buses; erecting, furnishing and equipping athletic facilities; and preparing, developing, improving and equipping playgrounds, play fields, athletic fields, athletic facilities and sites?

The following is for informational purposes only:

The estimated millage that will be levied for the proposed bonds in 2024 is 2.00 mills (\$2.00 on each \$1,000 of taxable valuation) for a 0 mills net increase over the prior year's levy. The maximum number of years the bonds of any series may be outstanding, exclusive of any refunding, is twenty-one (21) years. The estimated simple average annual millage anticipated to be required to retire this bond debt is 3.46 mills (\$3.46 on each \$1,000 of taxable valuation).

(Pursuant to State law, expenditure of bond proceeds must be audited, and the proceeds cannot be used for repair or maintenance costs, teacher, administrator or employee salaries, or other operating expenses.)

**BOND PROPOSAL
NO TAX RATE
INCREASE
EXPECTED OVER THE CURRENT RATE**

Bond Proposal Frequently Asked Questions

How would the bond proposal impact my property tax rate?

If approved by voters, the FHPS combined debt millage rate is estimated to remain the same as the current levy with no tax rate increase to property owners. The current combined debt millage tax rate of 6.05 mills is estimated to remain the same.

Why \$340 Million?

FHPS operates 26 buildings, totaling more than two million square feet on 650 acres. Within these facilities, FHPS educates nearly 9,200 students, operates the Community and Aquatic Center, the Forest Hills Fine Arts Center, and provides programming for youth, adults, and senior citizens. For general reference, our district is larger than 97 percent of public school districts in Michigan.

While some projects were accomplished with the 2018 bond, not all schools received improvements to their building. The 2023 bond proposal seeks to continue district-wide improvements to modernize learning spaces, improve athletics and community facilities, and update infrastructure.

The 2023 bond proposal would fund projects across the district.

BOND 2023 PROPOSED PROJECTS	Learning Environment	Athletic Facilities	Playground	Mechanical	Paving	Roofing	Modernize	Technology Infrastructure	Instructional Technology
Ada Elementary	X		X	X	X			X	X
Ada Vista Elementary			X	X	X	X		X	X
Collins Elementary			X		X			X	X
Knapp Forest Elementary	X		X	X				X	X
Meadow Brook Elementary	X		X	X	X			X	X
Orchard View Elementary			X	X	X			X	X
Pine Ridge Elementary			X	X	X			X	X
Thornapple Elementary			X	X	X			X	X
Central Woodlands 5/6	X		X	X				X	X
Goodwillie Environmental 5/6	X		X	X		X		X	X
Northern Trails 5/6	X		X	X	X			X	X
Central Middle				X	X			X	X
Eastern Middle	X				X	X		X	X
Northern Hills Middle	X			X		X		X	X
Central High	X	X		X	X	X		X	X
Eastern High	X	X			X	X		X	X
Northern High	X	X		X		X		X	X
Transition Center								X	X
Fine Arts Center				X		X	X	X	
New Aquatic Center		X							
Community Center		X		X	X		X	X	
Support Facilities and Services, Buses				X		X	X	X	

Why is a new aquatic center included in the proposed projects?

The current pool is 30 years old and is nearing the end of its expected useful life. It is scheduled at all hours of the day to try to accommodate the most aquatic programs, but scheduling is a significant constraint. The proposed aquatic center would have two pools — a larger competition pool to provide the opportunity to host larger, post-season athletic events, and a smaller, warmer, zero-entry pool would better support our non-competitive aquatic programs. The new aquatic center would support athletics, community wellness, and student clubs. Located on the campus of the FHPS Fine Arts Center and the administration and transition center building, it would provide additional space for events, practices, and meets, and provide more space for large gatherings. Community members are also experiencing access issues with the pool, and this new pool is intended to be shared with the community to support programs such as swimming lessons, senior swimming, lap swim, and more.



What will happen to the current Community and Aquatic Center?

The current pool would be filled in and the area would be repurposed. Ideas are not finalized but include additional spaces for our community enrichment programming and meeting spaces. The building is also scheduled for updating to better accommodate the change in our community programming.

Operating Millage Proposal

Operating Millage Proposal Ballot Language

This proposal will allow the school district to levy the statutory rate of not to exceed 18 mills on all property, except principal residence and other property exempted by law, required for the school district to receive its revenue per pupil foundation allowance.

Shall the limitation on the amount of taxes which may be assessed against all property, except principal residence and other property exempted by law, in Forest Hills Public Schools, Kent County, Michigan, be increased by .5 mill (\$0.50 on each \$1,000 of taxable valuation) for a period of 2 years, 2024 and 2025, to provide funds for operating purposes; the estimate of the revenue the school district will collect if the millage is approved and levied in 2024 is approximately \$395,000 (this millage is to restore millage lost as a result of the reduction required by the Michigan Constitution of 1963 and will be levied only to the extent necessary to restore that reduction)?

Operating Millage Frequently Asked Questions

What is the impact of the operating millage?

- The operating millage is a component of the Foundation Allowance, which is the district's largest source of funding for operations.
- The State of Michigan assumes school districts are levying 18 mills. However, when property tax values rise faster than the rate of inflation, districts are required to reduce the number of mills being levied. A reduction in mills being levied results in lost revenue.
- It is expected that, if approved, Forest Hills Public Schools will collect approximately \$395,000 to support operating costs in 2024 and 2025.
- If the operating millage is not approved, FHPS will fail to receive approximately \$395,000 of annual operating revenue.

Does it impact homeowners?

No. This tax is levied on non-homestead properties. Non-homestead properties represent industrial, commercial, and some agricultural properties as well as second homes. It does not include a family's primary residence.

To learn more

- about the bond proposal visit www.fhps.net/2023-bond-proposal
- about the operating millage proposal visit www.fhps.net/2023-operating-millage-proposal
- about how public schools are funded visit www.fhps.net/departments/business-office
- Call the FHPS administration office at 616-493-8800.**