

A Message from the Superintendent

School Bond Election



Superintendent Behm

Dear Forest Hills Voter:

You will soon receive an absentee ballot to vote in the November 6, 2018 election. Forest Hills Public Schools is asking the community to consider a bond proposal on the November ballot, and this letter is intended to provide you with more details about this request.

If voters approve this bond proposal, there is expected to be **no increase to taxpayers** and it would provide \$130 million to fund capital improvements phased in over eight years. The Forest Hills Public Schools 2018 bond proposal was developed to **INVEST** in the district's infrastructure by upgrading aging systems to save operational costs, **SECURE** our schools by upgrading safety measures, and **INSPIRE** our students by providing modern learning environments.

This proposal was developed to **INVEST** in the district's infrastructure by:

- Upgrading critical mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems such as boilers, chillers, and fresh air handling units in all schools
- Replacing systems at the end of useful life cycles
- Continuing snowmelt systems
- Replacing roofing, parking lots, and sidewalks
- Relocating and constructing the district's administration office to the Fine Arts Center campus
- Improving athletic facilities, as identified

This proposal was developed to **SECURE** our schools by:

- Funding continual improvements to safety and security measures within our district as school safety solutions evolve
- Updating lighting, occupancy sensors, and surveillance systems
- Replacing aging buses to keep the fleet modern and safe

This proposal was developed to **INSPIRE** our students by:

- Transforming over 500 classrooms to create dynamic learning environments and age-appropriate workspaces, including flexible furniture, energy efficient LED lighting, and integrated technology
- Updating technology infrastructure, including classroom multimedia and devices, to support teaching and learning
- Providing project-based learning environments to support collaborative learning
- Continuing media center improvements
- Spending the majority of bond funds to transform classrooms, where students spend a large part of their time at school

Additional information is available on the district website to inform and educate our community about this election. Please visit www.fhps.net or call our administration office at (616) 493-8800.

With deep respect,

Daniel Behm
Superintendent

The graphic features a teal background with a school hallway scene. In the center is the Forest Hills Public Schools logo, which includes the school name in a stylized font and the tagline "All Learners Achieving Individual Potential". To the right, three circular icons represent the themes: "INVEST" (a bar chart and house), "SECURE" (a hand holding a shield and a padlock), and "INSPIRE" (a group of people and a lightbulb). The text "Forest Hills Public Schools, Nov. 6, 2018, Bond Proposal" is displayed at the bottom in white on a dark teal background. A sign in the background reads "OPEN COMMUNICATION".

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6590 Cascade Road SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546
All Learners Achieving Individual Potential
Forest Hills Public Schools



Frequently Asked Questions

What is a bond proposal and how can funds from a bond be spent?

A bond proposal is how a public school district asks its community for authorization to borrow money for capital expenditures by selling bonds. Voter-approved bond funds can be spent on new construction, additions, remodeling, site improvements, athletic facilities, playgrounds, buses, furnishings, equipment, and technology. Funds raised through the sale of bonds **cannot** be used on operational expenses such as employee salaries and benefits, school supplies, and textbooks. Bond funds must be kept separate from operating funds and must be audited by an independent auditing firm.

Why is Forest Hills Public Schools asking voters to consider a bond proposal now?

The last time FHPS voters approved a bond was in 2013 and the previous bond projects are nearing completion. The November 2018 bond proposal would fund projects for the next eight years, and would continue to preserve operating funds for student programming.

How will the bond impact student learning?

Educational design has evolved over the decades, but most of our learning spaces have not. Our classrooms have not seen major renovations since they were originally built, with our oldest school building originally constructed in 1954. Some schools need more improvements than others. A majority of this bond would be spent on transforming classrooms and learning environments for all students. Modern learning environments support more collaborative and interactive teaching and learning styles that prepare students for success beyond the classroom.

Will any of the bond funds be used for safety and security?

Yes. The district will use bond funds to continue our efforts to ensure buildings and sites are secure for students and staff. As safety and security measures evolve, it is important that we remain in the forefront of security. Over the summer, the district enhanced the secure entrances at all schools. These projects were funded by the voter-approved bond proposal in 2013.

Why \$130 Million?

FHPS operates 26 buildings, totaling more than two million square feet on over 650 acres. Within these facilities, FHPS educates nearly 10,000 students, operates the Community and Aquatic Center, the Forest Hills Fine Arts Center, and provides programming for youth, adults, and senior citizens. The district is larger than 96 percent of public school districts in Michigan. Proposed bond projects were identified through extensive facility needs assessments and input from the district's revenue task force. If approved, the majority of bond funds would be spent on transforming over 500 classrooms, and fund additional capital improvement projects over the next eight years.

Will this increase my taxes?

No. If voters approve this bond proposal, there is expected to be **no increase to taxpayers**. This summer, the FHPS Board of Education approved a reduction of .70 mills in the tax rate to meet its required bond payments, which reduced the tax liability for our taxpayers. The district continues to demonstrate good stewardship and fiscal responsibility by retiring bonds as soon as possible. Forest Hills Public Schools holds an Aa2 rating with Moody's Investors Service, one of the highest ratings held by public schools in Michigan, with strong financial management being a contributing factor.

Why are there different debt millage rates in the ballot language?

The wording used in the ballot language is required by law. We are obligated to share the millage/tax rate that will be levied in the first year to make our required debt payment for the new bonds. In this case, the new bonds would require levying .45 mills to make the required debt payment.

We are also sharing the new proposal's impact to the total millage/tax rate that will be levied to make all required debt payments for the new and old bonds. With this bond proposal, the total mills needed to make the required debt payment for the new and old bonds is actually a decrease of .10 mills. Said differently, the net impact to tax payers is a reduction in the tax rate.

Ballot Language



Forest Hills Public Schools Bonding Proposal

Shall Forest Hills Public Schools, Kent County, Michigan, borrow the sum of not to exceed One Hundred Thirty Million Dollars (\$130,000,000) 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; erecting, furnishing and equipping a new administration building; purchasing school buses; and erecting, furnishing 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 2019 is 0.45 mill (\$0.45 on each \$1,000 of taxable valuation) for a 0.10 mill net decrease over the prior year's levy. The maximum number of years the bonds of any series may be outstanding, exclusive of any refunding, is fifteen (15) years. The estimated simple average annual millage anticipated to be required to retire this bond debt is 1.99 mills (\$1.99 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 Breakdown

25%



INVEST

20%



SECURE

55%



INSPIRE



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