



Bond Proposal November 8, 2022

Voters in our school district will head to the polls on November 8, 2022, to vote on a bond proposal for Buchanan Community Schools. This bond will open access for our district to address facility improvements at our school buildings.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs):

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 to pay for capital expenditures. Voter-approved bond funds can be spent on new construction, additions, remodeling, site improvements, athletic facilities, playgrounds, buses, furnishings, equipment, technology, and other capital areas.

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.

When is the election?

Tuesday, November 8th, 2022. Polls will be open from 7 a.m. until 8 p.m. Starting Sept. 29, 2022, absentee voter ballots will be available for issuance to voters.

Why is this bond election necessary?

This bond will open access for our district to address physical areas of our school buildings based on a facility evaluation. In addition, by addressing the areas at Moccasin and Buchanan High School, we can move grade-levels to provide a more common grade span that is shared by almost 70% of schools in the US and create a better alignment of students with similar growth and development stages.

Below are the proposed grade-level alignments:

<u>Ottawa Elementary</u>	<u>Moccasin Elementary</u>	<u>Middle School</u>	<u>High School</u>
Grades: PK-1	Grades: 2-5	Grades: 6-8	Grades: 9-12

What are the key projects in this bond proposal?

Based on results from the survey and priorities developed by the school district, below is the list of improvements and additions the bond will fund. Note that all projects have been approved by the Michigan Department of Treasury.

Moccasin Elementary School building renovation and expansion:

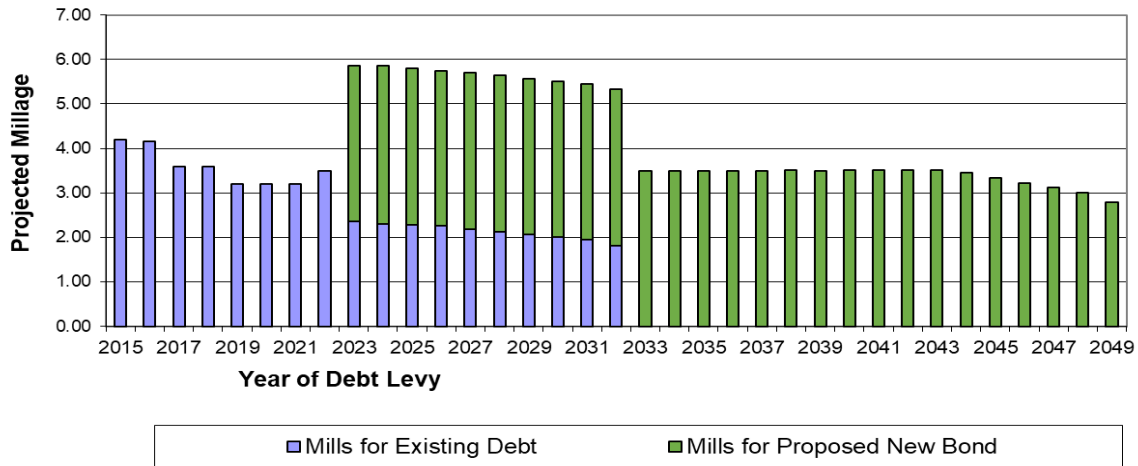
- Renovate and Expand Moccasin Elementary
 - Security Enhancements
 - Infrastructure Upgrades throughout the existing building
 - Windows, HVAC, Roof, technology, restrooms, LED lighting
 - Building expansion
 - New classroom wing, regulation-size gym with bleachers, cafeteria, media center, music room, elevator
 - New bus pickup and drop-off location
 - New playground equipment

High School Projects - Our facility study also identified areas at our high school building. We studied building a new school. However, at the cost of \$55 million, this was deemed to be too expensive. Therefore, we are proposing the following updates to this building at the cost of \$14.7 million.

- Renovate and improve our 100-year-old Buchanan High School
 - Security Enhancements
 - Infrastructure Upgrades throughout the existing building
 - Windows, HVAC (including air conditioning), technology, restrooms, LED lighting, corridor flooring
 - Science Lab renovations
 - Culinary Lab renovations
 - Renovation of existing classrooms
 - Reconfiguration of the Media center for better utilization
- Sports Complex Improvements
 - Resurfacing of the track
 - New turf field for expanded utilization of the space for football, band practice, and competitions

How would the bond proposal impact my property taxes?

BUCHANAN COMMUNITY SCHOOLS MILLAGE PROJECTION FOR AN NOVEMBER 2022 BOND PROPOSAL



The estimated millage that will be levied for the proposed bonds in 2023, under current law, is 3.50 mills (\$3.50 on each \$1,000 of taxable valuation). The maximum number of years the bonds of any series may be outstanding, exclusive of any refunding, is twenty-eight (28) years.

Of the 3.5 mills estimated for the first year, 1.15 mills are falling off from the existing debt. The millage increase from the current levy is 2.35 mills. This means if your home has an estimated taxable value of \$75,000, (approximately 1/2 market value of \$150,000), with an average household income of (\$56,000), your property taxes will increase by an estimated \$123.37 or an increase of \$10.28/month.

The debt levy has declined from 4.20 mills in 2015 to the 3.50 mills levied in 2022. As shown in the chart above, the projected 2023 levy with the proposed bonds of 5.85 mills is 1.65 mills higher than the 4.20 mills levied in 2015.

Use the tax calculator below to estimate the net tax increase after consideration for the Michigan Homestead Tax Credit that may be applicable to some Taxpayers.

[Click here to use the Tax Calculator](#)

How has the school district prepared its finances in anticipation of the bond election?

In May of 2021, Buchanan Community Schools and the Board of Education saved taxpayers \$882,834 by refinancing the District's 2013 School Building and Site Bonds. The debt levy for the existing debt is projected to decrease by 1.15 mills with the 2023 levy, and much of that millage savings is attributed to the 2021 bond refinancing. The proposed bonds are projected to require 3.50 mills in the first year, which is a 2.35 mill increase from the 2022 levy since the mills for the other debt are expected to be reduced by 1.15 mills with the 2023 levy.

Would the approval of the bond proposal have an impact on the operational budget?

While funding from this bond proposal is independent of the district's general fund operating budget, the bond would likely positively impact the district's general fund by allowing the district to reallocate operating funds currently being spent on aging facilities and mechanical systems. The operational savings generated from new and cost-efficient facilities could be redirected to student programs and resources.

What are area schools doing for bond proposals?

Here is a list of districts in Berrien and Van Buren Counties with similar bond proposals that their voters approved from 2018-2022:

District	Election Date	Bond Total
Berrien Springs Public Schools	11/6/2018	19,730,000
Mattawan Consolidated School	8/7/2018	19,120,000
Paw Paw Public Schools	5/3/2022	47,500,000
South Haven Public Schools	5/4/2021	34,850,000

How can voters be sure the bond funds would be spent how they are supposed to be?

Michigan law requires that the expenditure of bond proceeds be audited. The bond proceeds can only be spent for purposes approved by the voters. The bond cannot be used for repair or maintenance costs, teacher, administrator, employee salaries, or other operating expenses. An audit would be completed at the end of each series to ensure compliance. Every bond construction fund is required to have an independent audit, per Bulletin 7 and Public Act 451 of 1976 of the Revised School Code, effective May 12, 2014 (revised September 12, 2017). The objective of the audit is to determine if the bond proceeds have been expended consistently with the stated purposes for which the bonds were authorized by the voters.

The audit must be performed by an independent CPA, licensed by the Michigan State Board of Accountancy, and comply with generally accepted auditing standards as adopted by the American Institute of CPAs. A bond construction fund audit report is required after construction is completed as determined by a Certificate of Substantial Completion. This report is for the entire construction period, from the sale of the bond issue or the beginning of the project (whichever is earlier) through completion, and must include all activity in the fund for that period.

If I rent a house, can I vote

Yes, if you rent a house, you can still vote. You must be a registered voter in the city or township you live in and within the school district's boundaries.

Where can I get information about voting?

Go to the Michigan Voter Information website mvic.sos.state.mi.us or call the Clerk's Office where you reside.

Do I need to update my voter registration?

You need to update your voter registration if you have changed your name or address since the last time you voted. You can do this at any Secretary of State's Office or the Clerk's Office where you reside.

Can I vote by absentee ballot?

All registered voters in Michigan can now vote using what is called an absentee ballot. You do not need an excuse or a reason. You can vote by absentee ballot through the mail without leaving your home. You can also go to your city or township clerk's office or drop box to return your absentee ballot, which we recommend if you return a ballot within two weeks of election day, to avoid possible postal delays. Go to mvic.sos.state.mi.us for more information.

What key dates do I need to know before Tuesday, November 8, 2022?

- Registering to vote:
 - The last day for voters to register by mail is October 24, 2022
 - Voters may register in person through November 8, 2022 (election day) with the required documentation

- Absentee Voting:
 - Absentee voter ballots are available from September 29 until November 8, 2022
 - Contact your local clerk with questions.

If I need more information, what do I do?

Email questions to bond@buchananschools.com

When will the vote occur?

Tuesday, November 8, 2022, is election day, but absentee voting can occur leading up to that date. All registered voters may cast an absentee voter ballot by mail. Voters may also cast a ballot at the polling location established by their city/township. If you have questions or do not know where you vote, please contact your city/township office. Polls will be open from 7:00 am to 8:00 pm on Tuesday, November 8, 2022. Go to mvic.sos.state.mi.us for more information.

Why add additional classrooms to Moccasin?

The Media Center and the music room are currently shared spaces. Additional rooms will allow for more appropriate, dedicated spaces.

Why is a gymnasium being added to Moccasin?

Today the gymnasium is a dual-purpose cafeteria and gymnasium. This means the space must transition between the cafeteria and gymnasium daily, sometimes multiple times per day (for breakfast and lunch). Dedicated space for each will allow the staff to spend less time moving tables and the PE teacher more time to focus on physical education.

This will also help the district overcome the scheduling challenge of having all competitions at the high school because the middle school is not set up properly for competitions. (There are no bleachers for spectators.)

Will the district use ESSER funds for facility projects?

Yes, the district is utilizing ESSER funds to update the HVAC at Ottawa Elementary and Buchanan Middle School. Ottawa Elementary School will receive additional air quality improvements through current district funds, enhancing improvements made in 2015. Buchanan Middle School will receive air conditioning in the north wing through existing district ESSER funds. In addition, the district utilized ESSER funds to install mini splits in two rooms with computers at the high school to address air quality.

Is this bond large enough to address facility needs?

The community participated in a survey that was sent to district residents. The community responses guided the district's direction to choose the projects, the cost for the overall project, and the decision to move forward with the proposal.

How was the project scope of the bond proposal developed?

Goal five of the district's strategic plan states Buchanan Community Schools will develop and sustain efficient use of all resources by providing quality technology, facilities, and business services to optimize operations for improved student achievement. Our long-range objective is to maintain facilities that support a positive learning environment.

In December 2020, the district determined that facility structural needs could no longer be appropriately addressed by the regular upkeep of our maintenance department. As the age of our buildings increases, the number of repairs are increasing. In order to maintain a positive learning environment additional funds would be needed.

The district took the entire year of 2021 to engage in conversations with staff, community members, and the Board of Education for input on moving forward with addressing facility needs. It was once again confirmed that regular maintenance upkeep would not be enough to address the repairs needed.

A professional third-party survey was mailed to community members this past March to gain additional input. This input assisted in determining the scope of a bond proposal along with gaining feedback on the financial impact of a prospective bond.

With over a year-long study, careful consideration, and community feedback, the Board of Education adopted the resolution to call the election in August.