

Life-safety work an ongoing D86 matter

Addressing backlog of safety and security deficiencies is one objective of Nov. 6 referendum

By Ken Knutson

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As one might imagine, the \$166 million bond issue ballot question that awaits Hinsdale High School District 86 residents in the Nov. 6 election is intended to fund a lengthy list of improvement projects.

If the referendum passes, about a quarter of the proceeds will be spent on projects per-

taining to infrastructure, security and safety.

Every 10 years, school districts are required to conduct a Life Safety Study and submit a report to the regional office of education. The district's architect, ARCON, prepared the report in 2017, and district board members approved it for submission at the beginning of this year. Items designated "A" for high priority

must be addressed within one year; lower priority "B" needs must be repaired within five years.

The study found \$40 million in infrastructure, safety and security issues that needed to be addressed. This summer the district carried out \$1.7 million in work deemed the most critical of the life-safety projects, including roofing work at both schools, masonry restoration and improvements to the foundation and ramp at Central. At the Sept. 17 board meeting, board members signed off on next year's projected \$1.9 million in projects, including \$318,000 for more masonry restoration at Central and \$704,500 to repave South's student parking lot.

Josh Stephenson, the district's chief financial officer, said those identified as top priority projects must be done as soon as possible.

"There's a time-frame to as to when they have to be completed," he said. "This summer, all summer construction money went to pay for the most serious items."

With Central nearly 70 years old and South more than 50 years old, age becomes a costly factor.

"A number of the life-safety items are issues that are original to the building," Stephenson said, citing the original air handling units and boilers that need replacement. "The items kind of pile up over time if we don't have the ability to address them."

The district has not gone out to referendum since 1962 — which was to fund the construction of South — and has basically used operating funds to pay for capital improvements, Stephenson said.

"That's not a large enough dollar amount to address all of the items that need to be addressed," he said. "The district does not have enough money in the operating budget to keep up with repairing all the facilities' needs and replacing all the expensive equipment at the end of its useful life."

Other projects on the life safety list are new back-up generators, upgraded grandstands at Central and new turf fields and tennis courts at both schools

"Those are probably items that people are familiar with because they're (visible)," he said.

Replacing the schools' intercom systems for enhanced



notifications and security is far less conspicuous but vitally important, Stephenson said. Regardless of the result at the polls Nov. 6, the district is legally mandated to find a way to address the life safety list.

"We'll just continue moving forward with whatever available funds we have operationally until we figure out what's happened with the referendum," he said.

Some community members have erroneously stated the district could borrow the money needed to address life-safety issues without seeking voter approval, Superintendent Bruce Law said at Tuesday's finance committee meeting.

But stipulations of the tax cap limit how much the district can borrow for any type of work.

"The notion that the board can just sell life-safety bonds and fix all the problems and not have to go to referendum is incorrect," Law said.

Life-safety list

These are the projects associated with the District 86 Life-Safety Report, and cost estimates, included in the \$166 million referendum.

Security & safety

Install mass notification intercom system
 Central — \$720,000
 South — \$660,000
 Improved door security/communication systems
 Central — \$800,000
 South — \$800,000

Replace exterior and interior doors
 Central — \$726,600
 South — \$699,000
 Replace handrails, guardrails and balusters

Central — \$363,000
 South — \$202,500
 Install smoke detectors, distribution panel
 Central — \$151,200
 South — \$42,000
 Replace emergency backup generator
 Central — \$240,000
 South — \$240,000
 Grand total
 Central — \$3 million
 South — \$2.7 million
 Total — \$5.7 million

Infrastructure

Replace electrical hardware
 Central — \$327,000
 South — \$609,600
 Replace roofing
 Central — \$6.6 million
 South — \$5.1 million
 Grind, tuckpoint masonry
 Central — \$308,700

South — \$183,366
 Building envelope projects

Central — \$600,705*
 South — \$1.1 million*
 Provide ventilation/exhaust

Central — \$462,000
 South — \$528,000
 Replace air handling units

Central — \$1.8 million
 South — \$1.1 million
 Replace boiler, hot water, condensing systems
 South only — \$1.4 million

Paving projects
 Central — \$59,820**
 South — \$536,488**
 Replace/repair concrete/asphalt

Central — \$591,960
 South — \$780,600
 Replace artificial turf fields

Central — \$1.2 million
 South — \$1.1 million
 Replace parking lots
 Central — \$1.2 million
 South — \$330,360
 Replace stadium grandstands

Central only — \$1.26 million

Replace tennis courts
 Central — \$690,000
 South — \$600,000
 Site work projects
 Central — \$250,200
 South — \$203,440
 Separate sanitary and storm sewers

Central only — \$4.64 million

Grand total
 Central — \$20 million
 South — \$14.4 million
 Total — \$34.4 million

* a portion is not included in life-safety
 ** not included in life-safety



Replacement of the Hinsdale Central home grandstand is on the list of items identified in District 86's 10-year Life Safety Report submitted earlier this year. Many life-safety and security projects are part of the \$166 million referendum on the Nov. 6 ballot. (Jim Slonoff photo)