

Referendum will address 'critical needs'

If approved, \$76 million bond issue will cover \$46.4 million worth of projects at Central

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Hinsdale Central High School athletic teams won a record-setting seven IHSA state championships in the 2014-15 school year. Two hundred and eighty-seven members of the class of 2016 were named Illinois State Scholars. Thirty-two of its members were named

National Merit Semifinalists. Thirteen students earned perfect ACT scores last year.

And yet there aren't enough dedicated science classrooms at the school to accommodate the two additional sections of science courses needed to meet enrollment.

"I'm already at max capacity for science," said Principal Bill Walsh. "We're

making due. We're ad-libbing classrooms to meet the needs."

A \$76 million facilities referendum on the April 4 ballot would provide two new fully functional science labs at the school, along with other classrooms, a new special education/student services area, a new pool and a new band room. (See sidebar for detailed list.)

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This is the third in a four-part series on the \$76 million facilities referendum Hinsdale High School District 86 has placed on the Tuesday, April 4, ballot.

Hinsdale Central projects

\$46.4 million

Aquatic center \$18.5 million

A new natatorium with an eight-lane 25-yard pool, locker rooms and spectator seating.

Special education, student services \$12.7 million

A 15,000-square-foot two story addition houses special education on the second floor, with break-out rooms, confidential offices, appropriate planning space and student areas and a sensory room. Student services is located on the first floor, with a counselor's commons and college and career center. Another 8,400 square feet of existing classroom and office areas will be renovated.

Fine arts \$6.5 million

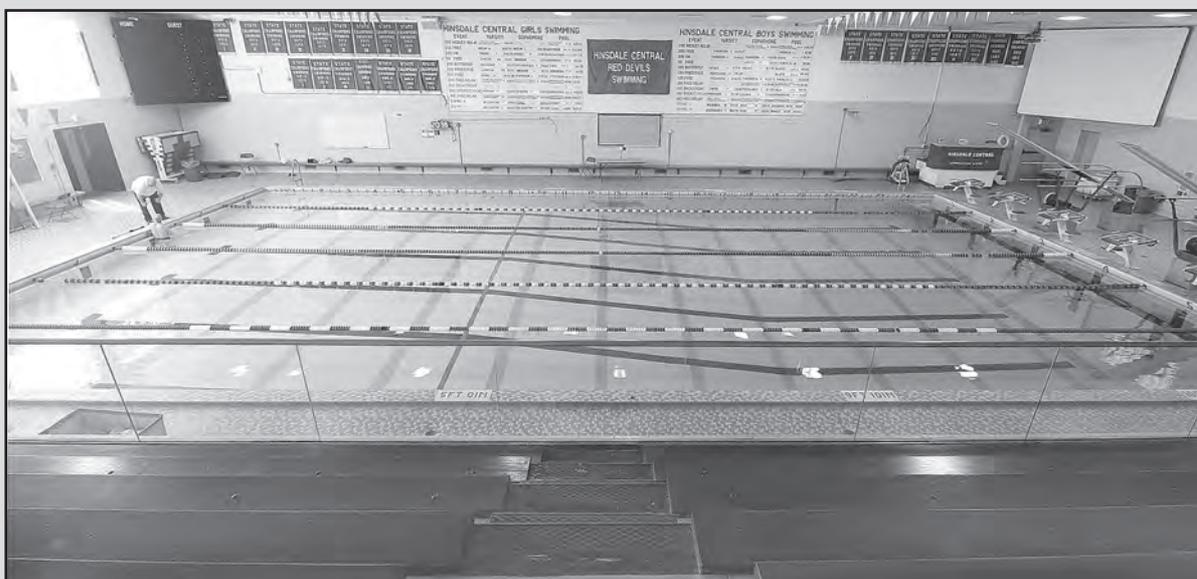
A 4,500-square-foot addition located between the existing pool and auditorium includes a new event entry, band room and small music/building support space with an ADA freight elevator serving first floor and basement.

Science labs and classrooms \$4.8 million

A 9,000-square-foot two-story addition to the science wing houses two science labs and support spaces on the first floor and three general classrooms on the second floor

Flagg Creek compliance \$3.9 million

Referendum work will trigger the need to separate sanitary and storm sewer lines for the entire site.



Hinsdale Central Principal Bill Walsh points out some of the projects that will be completed at the school if voters approve a \$76 million referendum Tuesday, April 4. About \$46.4 million worth of work is slated for Central, including \$18.5 million for a new aquatic center to replace the 68-year-old pool. (Jim Slonoff photos)

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The Hinsdale High School District 86 Board voted 6-1 Jan. 9 to ask voters for \$76 million to complete a variety of projects at both high schools. Administrators had recommended a \$95 million referendum, but the board decided to cut the cost by \$19 million by removing an 18-classroom addition at Central from the plan.

The adjustment to the referendum amount triggered a re-evaluation of the project list, said board member and facilities committee Chairman Jennifer Planson.

The building principals, Superintendent Bruce Law and Arcon architects sat down with the list of projects and the goal of getting the price at or below \$76 million.

"They really did the heavy lifting," Planson said. "They went through and determined what was the most critical need for each school and went from there."

The new list of projects totals \$71.3 million, which includes \$46.4 million worth of work at Hinsdale Central and \$24.9 million worth of work at Hinsdale South.

That list was presented to the facilities committee and then the full board.

The referendum amount will remain at \$76 million. If the identified projects come in at or under \$71.3 million, the board could decide to abate taxes or spend the \$4.7 million on other projects.

Four "additional considerations" for Central are listed on the project cost sheet: add a west drop-off loop and parking (\$3.1 million), remodel the cafeteria/kitchen/serving areas (\$3.3 million), convert the existing pool to a multipurpose area (\$3.7 million) and convert the wrestling area into classrooms (\$1.3 million).

Enrollment has been growing at Central more or less since the school was built in 1949. Despite a dozen additions over the years, the current enrollment of 2,873 exceeds the school's ideal capacity, which architects have listed at 2,490.

Gradual increases in the number of students and staff at the school have forced

building administrators to adapt and improvise.

"That's what we've been doing for a decade — problem-solving and reconfiguring to meet our needs," Walsh said.

He pointed to one such project in 2013-14, when the number of counselors at the school doubled from three to six. The math department office was condensed so part of the space could be divided up to create counselors' offices.

"We put up walls and now we have privacy issues," Walsh said. "They're double-paned, they're insulated, but the ceilings are old and the ventilation is old, so voices carry. So now you're having conversations which are private, which potentially create issues if they're overheard."

The referendum would provide funds to create a new student services area on the first floor of a two-story addition in the courtyard. Services would be close to the main entrance and clustered around a counselors' commons and college and career center. The commons would also offer a shortened route from the northwest academic areas of the building to the cafeteria, reducing travel time.

Special education would be housed on the second floor, with break-out rooms, appropriate storage, separate confidential offices, appropriate planning and work space for teachers and students, and a sensory room.

"All these direct services are right (next to) each other, which will be an unbelievable opportunity to really connect with students and meet their needs," Walsh said.

Although the list of projects has been refined more than once, Planson believes it's time to have voters weigh in on the proposal. Many district residents were upset that the board decided against putting a referendum before voters in November.

"Now there is something on the ballot," she said. "The taxpayers can decide if they like it or if they don't."

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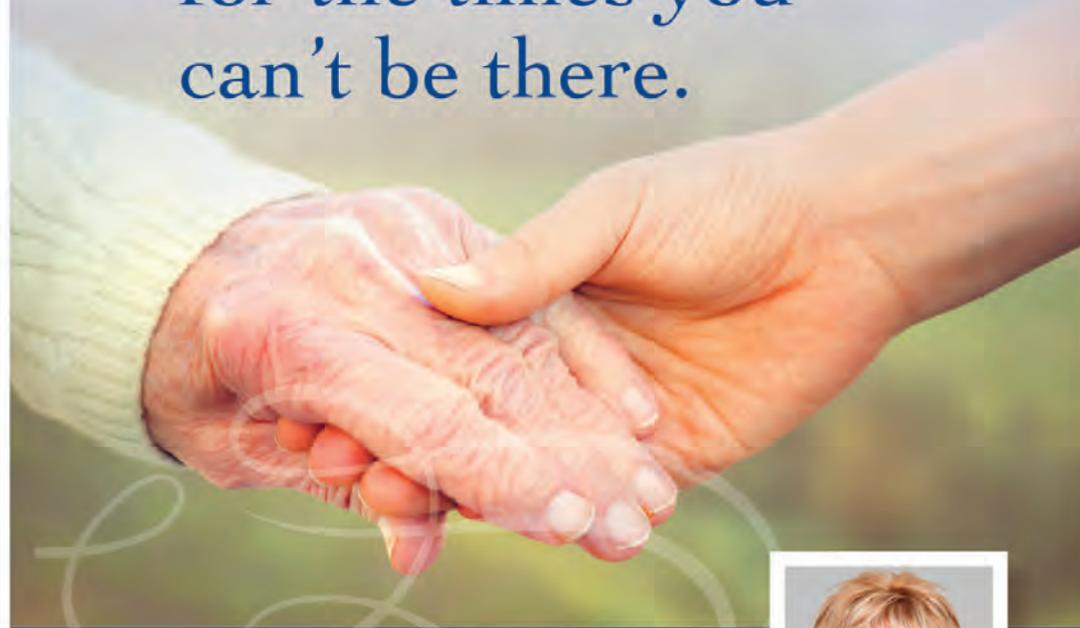
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