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Union CSD Board of Education Approves Bond Vote

District voters to consider ballot measure on November 5, 2024

LA PORTE CITY, IOWA — The Union Community School District Board of Education has selected a project proposal to make significant improvements across all district schools if a bond referendum is approved on November 5, 2024.

The decision follows over two years of facility planning by the board and administration. Union CSD partnered with Denovo Construction Solutions for a building assessment and feasibility study, resulting in multiple project options to address district needs.

The planning process included forming a task force to gather feedback from teachers and staff. Meetings were also held with staff and community members in recent months.

“We want to thank everyone who has volunteered their time and effort in addressing facility challenges at each of our campuses,” said Superintendent John Howard. “Our communities have a history of investing in schools and ensuring our students have the learning environments and opportunities they need to thrive.”

Union High School would see the most extensive improvements. The last major work to this building was in 2011, focusing on areas largely original to the building.

A major HVAC upgrade is central to this project. Much of the HVAC system is original to the 1953, 1963, and 1974 constructions. The steam boilers are approximately 20 and 40 years beyond their life expectancy and need replacement. The project includes a new boiler and chiller plant to the high school, as well as new ventilation systems to improve indoor air quality and dehumidification.

Additional renovations would be made to the science rooms, family and consumer science room, public restrooms, locker rooms, cafeteria, and library. This proposal also includes constructing a much-needed practice gymnasium and secondary locker rooms.

The existing library is underutilized and does not meet current programming needs. Likewise, the current kitchen and cafeteria spaces present operational challenges. The school board’s approved project includes relocating these spaces, transforming the existing cafeteria and kitchen into a new library and student center, and remodeling the existing library into a new commons area with a kitchen, public restrooms, and concessions.

The board believes this project will dramatically improve the educational experience and prepare the district for future learning needs. Additionally, the new commons area would serve

as a central hub for performing arts and athletic events commonly held at the high school, providing a welcoming environment for visitors.

This proposal also includes improvements to the fire alarm and mechanical system at Dysart-Geneseo Elementary School and La Porte City Elementary School. The current fire alarm system does not meet building code, and the board prioritizes student safety. The mechanical systems at the elementary schools, overhauled in 2010, will receive preventative maintenance and equipment replacement as needed.

At Union Middle School, plans include roofing repairs and replacements, public restroom renovations, and installing air conditioning in the gymnasium. These improvements were excluded from the major upgrades in 2019. The board believes these additional improvements will enhance the learning environment.

The total estimated project cost is \$27.45 million.

An approved bond referendum for \$20.5 million in November is required for these improvements. These funds will be supplemented by revenue from the district's Physical Plant and Equipment Levy (PPEL) and the statewide one-cent sales tax fund, known as [SAVE](#).

An approved bond referendum would have a tax impact of \$2.70 per \$1,000 of taxable property value. For a home with an assessed value of \$150,000, this amounts to \$14.55 per month. For commercial and industrial property with an assessed value of \$150,000, the monthly impact would be \$15.64.

Based on the average assessed value of agricultural land per county, the annual tax impact for one acre would be \$3.96 in Benton and Buchanan counties, and \$3.60 in Blackhawk and Tama counties.

Union CSD will provide more information in the coming weeks and months.

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