

Comments made on Bedford bond overlook the facts

I would like to address comments made about Bedford's school bond.

■ Comment: "I would support a short-term levy..."

Needs are no longer short-term fixes and too many to accomplish with a short-term investment approach.

■ Comment: "I will not support a \$70 million venture that will put my kids and grandkids in debt for 30 years, especially when large portions of this levy will go for remodeling the administration building, putting AstroTurf on the field, over \$1 million to tear down three of our schools and spending almost \$18 million to build a new elementary school."

The budget for the administration building is .27 percent of the bond project; hardly a large portion. It houses 2 educational programs: the Open Door Alternative High School and the Adult Education program.

The turf is 1.17 percent of the bond project and would allow for expanded use and reduced maintenance. That part of Bedford Public Schools' operational budget could go toward classroom operations.

The \$1 million to tear down schools is 1.43 percent of the bond. According to Plante Moran Cresa, the district would spend more in three to four years to carry insurance on empty buildings.

Spending \$18 million on a new school is a large portion of the bond. It

is about a quarter of the entire project and would serve a third of our elementary student population for a half century plus.

In the long run, that would reduce the investment your kids and grandkids would have to make to ensure their kids and grandkids have adequate school facilities. For example, the 1998 bond that built Monroe Road Elementary School/Bedford High School addition was \$19.9 million. By 2012, you would have needed \$35.6 million. Passing the buck will cost them more bucks and shortchange children in the meantime.

■ Comment: "Instead of tearing down our schools, why not make one of them into a trade school...?"

BHS has a successful CTE program.

Another person argued for technology vs. buildings. It is crucial to fix roofs so they do not leak on technology.

Studies have shown adequate facilities improve student achievement. (Glen I. Earthman, 2004, "Prioritization of 31 Criteria for School Building Adequacy.")

Every dollar the district spends on repairs and maintenance becomes a dollar it cannot spend in the classroom, where it is the best. This is an investment in keeping it that way for many years to come.

**Sandy Kraine
Lambertville**

Bedford schools at end of lifespan; vote yes on bond

As a result of state funding being reduced drastically, cuts impacting staff and the classroom were necessary. These cuts helped get Bedford Public Schools out of deficit but left the district with little to no money to support building updates.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) published a study in 1998. According to this study: "When a school is 20-30 years old, frequent replacement of equipment is needed. Between 30-40 years old, the original equipment should have been replaced, including the roof and electrical equipment. After 40 years, a school building begins rapid deterioration, and after 60 years most schools are abandoned."

Currently, the infrastructure of Bedford High School (1964), Bedford Junior High (1969), Douglas Road Elementary (1959), Jackman Road Elementary (1961), and Smith Road Elementary (1969) average 49.6 years in age. Using the data from the NCES, we are not only on the tail end of rapid deterioration, but we are getting close to unusable. The first graduates from when our current high school was built in 1964 are now 68. At that time, the only "technology" you'd find in a school was an overhead projector and a mimeograph machine. The graduates of 1964 never had heard of a computer, a Chromebook or Internet.

We have buildings with outdated

electrical, plumbing and HVAC systems. Restrooms are not ADA compliant. We have potholes and major cracks on the parking lots and playgrounds. Tiny, unventilated closets have been converted into ISD classrooms. Our secondary students are being taught in run-down portables.

I have heard complaints about spending money on the athletics facilities and on the arts. When the schools opened 50 years ago, there were just a handful of boys teams and very few girls teams. There are now 73 teams involved in high school and junior high sports, with more than 1,400 participants each year. Our track, which is used by community members every single day, is literally crumbling, yet it's the school's responsibility to pay for its replacement.

Our drama and music programs deserve a better performance arena. These groups provide amazing entertainment for our community year-round yet practice and perform in a substandard, cramped environment with uncomfortable seating and horrible viewing.

Voting yes on this school bond will allow us to free up the limited state money we do receive to put money back into the classrooms, where it belongs.

**Michelle German
Temperance**

Invest in youth, our No. 1 asset

The residents of Bedford Township are being asked on May 6 to make a significant investment into two of our most important assets: our students and our public school facilities. You can not separate the two; they are one in the same.

We do not view the proposed bond issue as a "build it and they will come," but rather "reinvigorate/reinvest and they will stay."

My wife and I are Bedford graduates along with numerous family members, and we have had many occasions to be inside the classrooms, halls and gyms of each of the schools for the last 50-plus years. However, what we had not done was to view them from the same perspective that we did for the past four weeks in attending the facility overview and tours. The voters of Bedford Township have been given an opportunity to see and hear for themselves what the condition of these buildings are in and to have any of their questions or concerns answered. Attending these walkthroughs has given us the insight we needed to make an informed decision May 6.

It is unfortunate that there has not been greater interest and turnout for the four schools — Douglas Road Elementary, Jackman Road Elementary, Bedford Junior High School and Bedford High School — that are at the core of this bond proposal. The deficiencies and issues with each of these schools are numerous and largely indicative of their age. The portables at BJHS and BHS long have been an embarrassment and a safety issue.

The time is now to stop putting bandages and patches on many critical components of these school buildings. Investment in our schools is about "paying it forward" to ensure we are providing the optimal environment for the education, growth and development of our No. 1 asset — our students.

We all need to pay it forward.

**Mike and Beth Wachtell
Lambertville**

ELECTION LETTERS

The Monroe News welcomes letters to the editor pertaining to issues being decided in the May 6 election. Discussion of the merits of a ballot issue is the preferred format for letters; outright or vague endorsements of specific issues is not. All letters must reach The Monroe News no later than one week before the election. That deadline date would be April 29. This allows for processing and planning for the space available.