

Bedford bond plan poorly conceived, not justified

Parents, imagine if one of your teenage children came to you and said, "I need you to buy me a new car. It will make me a better driver and prove how much you love me."

Many of us would respond by saying, "Nice try, but we have already proven how much we love you. And you don't really need a new car, you just want one. Furthermore, we expect you to be a good driver with the one you have. If you fix it up and maintain it properly, it will last many more years."

Sometimes as parents — and taxpayers — we just have to say no. Such is the case for many of us with the school bond issue.

As one who has worked on previous bond issues, I believe this is the most ill-conceived and poorly justified bond issue in the history of Bedford Public Schools. It's too big (\$70 million), too long (30 years) and too extravagant. It's like a wish list on steroids. Furthermore, if passed, I believe this will result in the largest tax increase in the history of Bedford. These problems alone make the proposal unacceptable, but there are many other flaws, too.

With previously successful bond issues, the overwhelming justification was rapidly increasing enrollment. Our buildings were literally

bursting at the seams. But now enrollment is declining and our future needs are very uncertain. How do you expect taxpayers to embrace a large, long-term financial commitment when our facility needs may be less in the foreseeable future?

Second, with declining enrollment and less operating funds coming in, how do you convince taxpayers that you'll be able to maintain these new facilities without additional taxes? You can't, and history has proved that you won't. If we pass this, we will most likely see another sinking fund proposal long before these bonds are paid off.

And shockingly the proposal even includes items (like buses and equipment for food service and maintenance) that have useful lives far less than 30 years. Financing assets like this over 30 years is fiscally irresponsible. How many of you have ever obtained a 30-year loan to buy a car? No bank would allow it, and neither should we.

Clearly this request is way oversized and not justified. There are more responsible and less expensive ways to address the legitimate needs of the district. Consider them.

Steven R. Lennex
Lambertville

Bond needed to give youth safer, healthy schools

The bond that is being put on the ballot for May 6 for Bedford Public Schools is an absolute necessity. This is not about beautiful schools or fancy fields. Michigan funds the schools under Proposal A. This is operational money. Capital improvement money comes from bonds such as the previous sinking fund. We cannot use the bond money for operations, however. If we do not have the capital improvement money, then all repairs, transportation, etc., will come out of the operational fund.

Bedford, sadly, had to close two buildings. This did get us out of debt, but, again, without the passage of the bond, we will be back where we started. One big example is busing. Buses are approximately \$100,000 each. We need a minimum of eight to nine. The bond would allow us to replace 20. Without the bond, that is money directly out of the classrooms. Putting in energy-efficient windows and doors will save money

that would be able to be put back into the classroom.

Those who say the 50-plus-year-old buildings are fine need to go look at them. Jackman Road Elementary had a boys bathroom that has smelled of urine for a very long time. They tore up the floor last week to find rotted pipes. The urinals no longer were hooked up to the pipes, and the flow of urine from 200 to 300 kids a day was going right into the ground beneath the building. If these pipes are rotten, then I am sure the rest are on their way out also.

It is more than just pretty buildings. It is safety, security and a healthy environment that we want for these kids. Please look up the FAQs on the Web site and look at the big picture, not just a couple things you might disagree with. A no vote will take money directly out of the classroom.

Kate Schmus
Temperance

Senior center talk complicates matter

Somehow the focus of the \$70 million Bedford Public Schools bond proposal for the demolition and new construction of the elementary schools slowly is being shifted to the issue of where to relocate the Robotics Club, Spring Arbor, Head Start and now the Bedford Senior Center.

I can only speak to my concerns regarding the senior center. First, it was mentioned that we might be able to occupy either Douglas Road or Jackman Road schools. Now, Temperance Road school is assuming the lead as the facility for our possible relocation. Temperance Road was built in the '50s, and the one-story addition of our senior center was built in the early '70s and, except for needing more space, is a reasonably usable building in my opinion.

But my primary concerns are: First, if the three BPS schools are in such structurally fragile condition as to render them borderline safe for our children, why would any of them be considered acceptable for our elderly citizens' use?

Second, the bond money may be used only for K-12. And I know for a fact that our senior center financial reserves never would be anywhere adequate to foot the bill for a partial school renovation to make it suitable for us. Grants may be available, but there are different types of grants — many, if not all, requiring matching funds and, depending on the use, may be one time or requiring reapplication every few years. Bedford Township and Bedford Schools lost RSVF, in part, because of that requirement.

Many of our senior center members grew up during the Great Depression of the '30s and know all too well that you don't spend the money unless you know for sure you are going to have it when you need it.

Vote as your conscience dictates, but please do vote.

Carol Frederick
Lambertville